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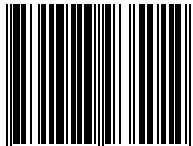
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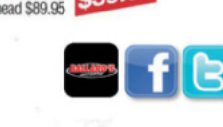
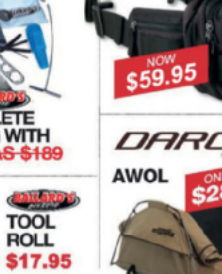
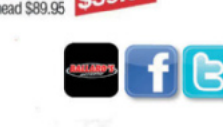


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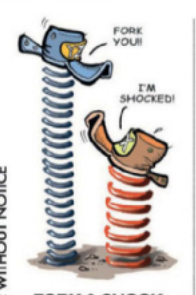
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Three very different 250F trailbikes go head to head in this month's issue

PHOTO — MATT BERNARD

ON THIS PAGE

A couple of riders making their way through the dust down the Finke track

PHOTO — DAMIEN ASHENHURST

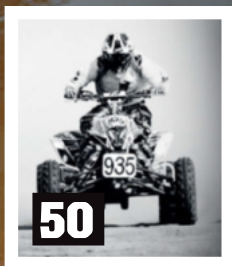




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Trailrider

MANAGING EDITOR

Damien Ashenhurst

DEPUTY EDITOR

Matt Bernard

STAFF WRITER

Shane Booth

CONTRIBUTORS

Greg Smith, Craig Bernard, Paul Sneddon, Ian Neubauer

DESIGNER

Jarrad McCallum

NATIONAL ADVERTISING MANAGER

Kizziah Fieldes: 0449 810 957

ADVERTISING DIRECTORY

Ian Cassel: 02 9887 0325

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Ian Cassel

ADVERTISING SENIOR DESIGNER

Martha Rubazewicz

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Karen Day



CHAIRMAN/CEO

Prema Perera

PUBLISHER

Janice Williams

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Vicky Mahadeva

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Emma Perera

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Karen Day

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

Mark Darton

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Kate Podger

EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anastasia Casey

PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE

Nerilee Chen

PREPRESS MANAGER

Ivan Fitz-Gerald

MARKETING & ACQUISITIONS MANAGER

Chelsea Peters

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MOTO WEBBER

Yep, that's Aussie car racing legend Mark Webber, suited up and ready to ride at Fossil Rock in Dubai. Mark's affiliation with Red Bull makes the KTM hook-up an easy one and out with him on the day were fellow F1 driver David Coulthard and Red Bull racing F1 chief technical officer Adrian Newey. To cap off the F1 parade, Jean Alesi also hit the dunes for the day with KTM royalty Heinz Kinigadner on hand to make sure the somewhat wobbly and very valuable ride crew got home safe.









BIKE OF THE MONTH

A precious piece of bike porn that we just couldn't ignore.

This whole dirtbike thing started with scramblers and those ancient relatives of the WR-Fs and EXC-Fs are getting a whole new lease on life through some brilliant custom builders. This build was actually commissioned by Ducati and put together by Officine Mermaid in Milan, Italy.

WHEEL T

BMW R 1200 GS

No manufacturer has the adventure runs on the board like BMW. Over the past five years new bikes from other marques have arrived to challenge the champ and they may well succeed; but as it stands, on current form and with its well-established track record, the R 1200 GS Adventure is opening the batting on strike while the Kato is also in but at the non-striker's end... for now. Enough of the cricket metaphors.

The R 120 GS's 1170cc flat-twin engine needs

no introduction. While the configuration may divide opinion, the performance doesn't. The now liquid-cooled engine is a gem that puts out 92kW that's all super-useable with amazing, smooth pick-up. Running shaft final drive (the KTM retains its chain), the BMW is outdone in electronic assists in stock form by the Kato but there are plenty of options available — an area BMW is so good at — to ratchet up the stocker. These include everything from keyless start and a Gear Shift Assistant Pro

Quick Shift to Dynamic ESA Electronic Suspension Adjustment and expanded riding modes. These are all on the BMW list alongside accessories that are among the best quality on the market.

The weight is very similar to the KTM but the feel is very different, with the Beemer contacting the tracks through its Paralever front and Telelever rear end. Nothing feels quite like a BMW and this system takes the credit for most of that.



LOW WHEEL

KTM 1290 SUPER ADVENTURE

KTM is leaving no doubt that it has its eye on the growing adventure market. It has four models available for the adventure-minded, backed by a whole heap of offroad credibility from endless rally success to, well, wins in pretty much everything else at the moment, from enduro and endurocross to motocross and supercross.

The 1290 Super Adventure is KTM's flagship model and the Austrian company has thrown everything it has at it. Aesthetically it's

unmistakeably a KTM; and in design the approach has been to give the bike everything it needs for any situation, which is also very KTM.

Under the bonnet of the Super Adventure is a 1301cc twin-cylinder 118kW engine that feeds through a six-speed 'box. There's more power than you'll ever need here and it's all controlled by a ride-by-wire throttle and the very civilised Cruise Control that comes as a stock feature.

Other notable electronic assists offer

suspension adjustment, four separate ride modes, tyre pressure monitoring, a stability control system and advanced ABS. Heated handgrips and a heated seat are also there for your most precious extremities. There's more, but if we tried to list every single assist here we'd need another two pages. KTM says the big unit comes in at 229kg dry. The tank takes 30 litres so add 30kg to that figure for a fair approximate fuelled weight.





2016 KATOS OUT FOR MORE WINS

KTM has put a heap of work into its motocross range for 2016. The offroad EXC line-up isn't yet due for a makeover so the focus was on the track blasters and they've certainly stepped things up. There's no denying we live in an orange world right now in terms of titles and race wins and these new SXs will feature heavily on podiums under riders like Cairoli, Dungey, Musquin and Herlings. And should Toby Price need to get on an SX no doubt he'll win on it as well.

One of the most improved models in the 2016

range is the 350SX, which is a model without a natural home but now giving the CRF450R a run in the power stakes while weighing in at 250F-like numbers.

A lot of those in the know believe that this is the bike for the future and that it's far more suitable for the majority of riders than the 450F. Will the Japanese join the 350F club? We doubt it. It would take a major change of race regs to persuade the Japanese of big sales potential in what is now a niche capacity. Still, we wish they would; 350 is a brilliant capacity.

2016 350SX UPDATES

- The DOHC engine of the 350 SXF features completely new construction to make it even more compact and powerful.
- New engine cases redesigned to centralise the rotating mass of the crankshaft and clutch while reducing overall length and weight.
- Completely reworked Keihin Engine Management System with 44mm throttle body featuring a lightweight direct-connect design.
- New electronic Launch Control for efficient starts; multiple engine maps to control the overall power delivery.
- New cylinder head combustion chamber geometry, optimised ports, new camshafts, new timing, new finger followers and new valve springs for improved power and reduced weight.
- Lightweight forged bridged box-type piston by CP.

- Shorter connecting rod mated to a shorter, stiffer crankshaft contributes to a light engine feel and strong power delivery.
- New five-speed transmission features wider gears with a new surface treatment on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th gears.
- Lighter chrome-moly steel frame provides 20 per cent more torsional rigidity with 30 per cent less longitudinal stiffness, resulting in improved handling and energy absorption.
- Smaller, lighter subframe design made with new aluminium profiles.
- Lighter "No Dirt" footpeg design that provides a larger surface area and features a "scraper" to reduce dirt build-up in the hinge.
- New CNC-machined upper triple clamp featuring a rubber damping system for the new Neken handlebar and ODI lock-on grips.

2016 YAMAHA YZ-Fs UNVEILED

As we went to print the 2016 Yamaha YZ450F and YZ250F had been unveiled in the US. While we hadn't received any official word on the Aussie models, it's unlikely they would differ greatly from the American bikes.

The YZ450F in particular is an offroad racing favourite from the blue stable and both models will be available in a special 60th-anniversary yellow livery that looks absolutely mint.

Interestingly, the US also got a YZ250X which is a YZ250 two-stroke with an 18-inch rear wheel, less compression, a wider-ratio gearbox and revised port timing. It may have hit our shores by the time we go to print and we'll be hoping for a headlight and ADR to follow. We had word some time ago this bike was on the cards so keep an eye on our Facebook page for up-to-date news on what should be a registrable YZ250 in Australia.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE 2016 YZ250F

1. A new, lightweight, forged, two-ring piston headlines the improvements to the 2016 YZ250F. The piston features a flat crown surface with additional strengthening ribs and a shorter, more durable piston pin with diamond-like carbon (DLC) coating.
2. Revised piston oil jets direct oil underneath the new piston, which helps promote cooling and contributes to more stable engine performance.
3. Optimised crankshaft and counterbalancer designs provide a revised balance ratio, predictive power deliver and reduced vibration.
4. Revisions to the YZ250F clutch boss and shift-stopper arm provide smoother clutch engagement feel and more precise shifting action.
5. New ECU settings result in a smoother transition as the rider reaches the rev limiter.
6. New brake pad material and a larger 270mm front brake rotor deliver improved stopping power.
7. New front and rear suspension settings help smooth sudden jolts and reduce front-end dive for a smoother, more balanced damping feel when cornering.
8. Revisions to the clutch boss and shift stopper arm provide smooth clutch engagement feel and more precise shifting action when the gate drops.



WHAT'S NEW ON THE 2016 YZ450F

1. Launch Control System (LCS) uses high-precision ECU calculations to optimise power output, providing ideal acceleration off the gate, especially on hard track surfaces.
2. New intake and exhaust cam profiles and timing boost combustion efficiency and improve the engine's ease of use in the low- to mid-rpm range.
3. Revisions to the clutch boss and shift stopper arm provide smooth clutch engagement feel and more precise shifting action when the gate drops.
4. Revised engine mounts and a reshaped swingarm pivot section of the aluminium frame improve lateral rigidity.
5. New 270mm front disc brake (up from 250mm) also features a new brake pad material for exceptional stopping power and control for aggressive corner entry.
6. Valve lift and timing have been changed to produce more low-to-mid power.
7. The water pump impeller has been drilled to improve pressure distribution.
8. Triple clamp offset has been changed from 22mm to 25mm.
9. Shock spring rate has been softened from 58Nm to 56Nm.
10. Footpegs have been lowered 5mm.
11. The aluminium Bilateral Beam frame features a new forged section at the swingarm pivot and 2mm thicker motor mounts to improve further the rigidity balance for more front-end feel, cornering traction and unmatched lightweight handling.



NEW GREEN FOR 2016

Kawasaki has released pretty much a whole new KX450F for the 2016 season. Kawi engineers have been busy looking for power gains and weight losses for an already universally popular bike. But that's just the tip of the green iceberg — check out the list of new and improved bits and pieces:

- Among the lightest kerb weights in class following a 3.4kg overall weight reduction

- Lighter, more powerful engine with new engine cases
- Slimmer, lighter perimeter frame and swingarm to improve rider feel
- Intake camshaft is lighter and has revised timing for low-mid rpm response
- High-flow airbox with rear intake channels improves flow and reduce noise
- Header with integrated resonator chamber for crisp throttle response

- Mass-centralising exhaust muffler to reduce sound and weight
- Aggressive factory styling and flatter seat for easier rider movement
- Revised bridged-box bottom piston based on AMA factory race bikes
- Revised intake port improves performance in mid-to-high rpm range
- Revised intake valve shape increases air volume

- Plug & play DFI couplers allow easy engine-mapping changes
- Launch control based on factory race bike system
- Industry-leading Showa SFF-Air TAC fork and Uni-Trak rear suspension
- Four-way adjustable handlebar and two-way adjustable footpegs fit a wide range of riders



EPIC ERZBE FINISH

This year's edition of the Red Bull Hare Scramble on Sunday once again pushed the fastest 500 competitors to their limits, with just five riders completing the course within the four-hour time limit. A brand new section introduced for 2015 left even the favourites shaking their heads and resulted in the first four-way tie for first place in the history of the event

YOUNG HARD LUCK

There was a fair bit of controversy surrounding the disqualification of Wade Young, who missed a checkpoint in the Downtown section that was hidden in trees and barely visible. It seems poor form by the organisers to have a hidden checkpoint and deny Young an entire Erzberg finish just metres from the finish line.

All respect to Mario Roman, though. The fifth-placed Spaniard had to tackle the Downtown section unaided while the previous and winning group had each other to help — and he did it all with a busted-up knee. That's tough.



In 2015 the Erzberg Rodeo once again more than lived up to its fearsome reputation as the toughest Xtreme Enduro Race on the planet. This year's edition of the event was decided at the new "Downtown" section shortly before the finish line. Such was the scale of the challenge that the leading six riders were forced to help each other drag their bikes through a seemingly impassable forest. After more than an hour of backbreaking teamwork, four of the six emerged on the other side and opened the throttle in a final dash for the chequered flag. The fearsome foursome of Jonny Walker (UK), Alfredo Gomez (Spain), Andreas Lettenbichler (Germany) and Graham Jarvis (UK) crossed the line side by side after precisely four hours of racing and were welcomed with a huge round of applause by the crowd in the finish area. In recognition of the exceptional riding and determination shown by all of the athletes, organizer Karl Katoch announced the first ever four-way tie for first place.

"The Red Bull Hare Scramble was totally different this year from last," commented Brit Jonny Walker. "Without all the guys

pulling together it would have been almost impossible to finish."

The first section of the feared course — a steep gravel climb — saw several riders forced to bail out, including a number of favourites who had started on the front row but quickly found themselves sliding back down the slippery slope. But Walker, last year's winner, mastered this tricky ascent best and established a small lead on the chasing bunch. Among the high-profile names whose race day came to an early end was five-time Erzberg winner and hot favourite Taddy Blazusiak (Poland), who crashed early and was unable to continue.

As Blazusiak rued what could have been, Walker powered up the Iron Mountain. The only rider able to follow the youngster was fellow Brit and 2013 winner Graham Jarvis. A little further back, Gomez and Lettenbichler kept things interesting with a ding-dong battle for the final podium place. As the elite riders made their way towards the make-or-break sections, dozens of competitors further back were forced to admit defeat after failing to make it past the energy-sapping first part of the course.

Machine, Bathtub, Carl's Dinner, Dynamite and the brand new Downtown — as in previous years, this year once again the key sections of the course carried seemingly harmless names that nevertheless strike fear into the hearts of even the best enduro riders. For 2015, Erzberg Rodeo organiser Karl Katoch ratcheted up the difficulty level even further by introducing several new and devilishly difficult obstacles and adding 35km to the total race distance. The result was spectacular crashes, smoking engines and plenty of expletives screamed out into the sky by riders pushed to their mental and physical limits.

ABOUT ERZBERG

The Erzberg Rodeo is a four-day enduro festival held in a huge open-air pit mine located in Eisenerz, Styria. A total of 1500 riders take part, with the best 500 qualifying for the Red Bull Hare Scramble on the final day. Thousands of fans line the course to cheer on the athletes, while many more around the world follow the toughest Xtreme Enduro Race in the world on ServusTV and Red Bull TV.

RESULTS

1. Jonny Walker (UK),
Graham Jarvis (UK),
Andreas Lettenbichler
(Germany), Alfredo Gomez
(Spain)

5. Mario Roman
Serrano (Spain)

FOUR DAY SHAPING UP

Preparations for the 2015 Yamaha Australian Four Day Enduro (October 19-25) have been well under way for some time now with Deputy Chairman of the 2015 A4DE Committee Peter De Haan admitting, "It's been very hectic and there has been lots to do."

The A4DE will take place in Wynyard, which is not far from Burnie (which has an airport) on the north-west coast of Tassie.

"It's the first time something like this has been held in Tassie," continued Peter

De Haan. "So it is all very new to everyone involved. But there's been a lot of help from other states who have held previous events to give us an idea of what is required," he said.

"We're pretty well decided on the course, but the weather during the week will determine the exact course.

"Tasmania is quite famous for its bush trails and a lot of people come to ride them. The event will be held in an area with plenty of forestry land and a lot of hills."

Favourite for Tassie's first A4DE will no doubt be local lad and current WEC World Champ Matt Phillips.



MASCHINE ADVENTURE

Event management company Maschine has launched an almighty project, taking a group of adventure riders out to retrace the steps of the Burke and Wills expedition.

Departing Melbourne on August 19 and riding 3600 kilometres over 10 days to Karumba, Queensland on the Gulf of Carpentaria, the tour will be on the bucket-list of plenty of riders and surely a memorable event for all

those lucky enough to get a seat.

Event organiser Nick Selleck from Maschine said, "There is so much to the story of Burke & Wills that the average Aussie just doesn't know about. When you see the country that they trekked through you really gain an appreciation for just how hardy our early explorers must have been. I'm really excited to be able to offer riders the opportunity to relive this great Australian story."

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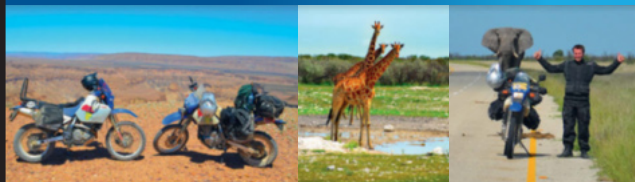


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FIVE TIPS

This is an extreme way to tackle a log of this size. Obviously popping the wheel this high off the ground isn't necessary to clear and conquer such an obstacle. It will, however, give you something to talk about over a few beers after the ride — instant trail-cred. Ensure you are square to the log and not coming in at an angle — that would lead to disaster.

Keep your vision up, looking ahead beyond the log. This isn't the way you'd attack a log if there were a tight turn or a technical obstacle the other side of it. Have a look ahead before you hit a log this aggressively; it's not cool to attack an obstacle then hit a tree and crash five metres beyond it.

A lot of clutch goes into getting the front wheel this vertical. With the revs nice and high, feed the clutch out aggressively to pop the front wheel up — don't dump the clutch and let the front come up this high (and this quickly) without keeping a finger or two over the clutch to control it. If the front wheel comes up way too fast or too high, pull the clutch back in to drop the front wheel a bit, but keep it high enough to clear the log. Use the log to bring the front wheel down; without it, you'd be flat on your backside.

You'll also need to be aggressive on the throttle to bring the front up. Maintain a little constant throttle too when the rear wheel hits the log; with no throttle at this point the bike would hit the log and slap down, and possibly get the frame jammed on the log.

Grip the bike with your knees. As the rear wheel hits the log there'll be an almighty thump and the bike will react quickly. Keep your knees slightly bent and absorb the impact from the rear of the motorcycle. Gripping with your knees and keeping a firm grip with your hands will keep the bike from launching out of your control.

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2014 BMW GS Safari

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

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RACELINE PROWASH

It's not just the cold we have to deal with this time of year, it's the friggin' mud — mud that gets into more places than seems possible. And how is it that you can hit it with your pressure washer point blank but it's still there when the bike's dry?

That's where Raceline Prowash comes in. We've given it a good workout and it does a great

job even when the bike is covered in that sticky red clay that's part toxic waste and part snot. It's also from an Aussie company that does its research and development very much on the tracks around this country with massive input from the Raceline Suzuki motocross team — so you know it's coming from a real place, not some sterile lab in Switzerland.

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-Toby Price



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THE WHOLE FINKE EXPERIENCE

Finke is arguably Australia's biggest dirtbike race. Yep, that's a big call, but when an event can entice 600 riders to fill the entire grid allocation in less than a couple of days, someone — or some people — are doing something right.

STORY AARYN MINERDS
PHOTOGRAPHY DAMIEN ASHENHURST

For 2015 things finally fell into place for me and I was able to make the trip from Adelaide to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory to witness the amazing Finke Desert Race.

The Finke has, for me, developed a mythical status. It's a race I read about a lot when growing up during the era when top motocross racers such as Stephen Gall and David Armstrong (the last big name MX racer to win, in 1986) were claiming the event.

From the mid 1980s through to the mid 2000s the race was dominated by local riders. Only two men from outside NT won in a 19-year period, including American Dan Ashcraft, who is the only international rider so far to win the event.

In recent years the race has been dominated by Ben Grabham and Toby Price, with the duo holding down the King of Finke crown most years since 2007.

My interest in the big race has spiked somewhat, mainly due to technology that lets me watch the live timing either at home or out at the track while having a ride. But while it's great being able to keep up to date with what's going on, I still had a massive urge to witness the event first hand and, to be honest, a similar need to race it — though that will have to wait.

With permission from my daughter, whose eighth birthday I would be missing as it fell on Saturday's prologue, I jumped in the car with my old man and hit the highway to Alice for this year's race.



ING RIENCE





I still had a massive urge to witness this event first hand and, to be honest, a similar need to race it

Not only was this my first trip to the event, it was also the 40th running of the race that was originally named “The There and Back” (possibly the coolest name ever for a race) in 1976 when Geoff Curtis won on a Yamaha 250.

FIRST TASTE

Arriving to the media briefing just after lunch on Friday, it quickly dawned on me just how big this event was and how much interest there is in a race held smack bang in the middle of this wonderful place we call Australia — and not just from the motorcycle media but the wider mainstream media, with a couple of national TV broadcasters on hand.

With the media briefing over we headed into the heart of Alice Springs to collect some supplies for the weekend.

It was then that I realised just how much the event meant to the local community. The shops were packed, and the local supermarket shelves had been cleared of all water and most of the lollies too as riders, teams and the thousands upon thousands of campers who would line the track grabbed essentials to keep them going for the next three days.

I got out early on Saturday morning to catch the sunrise as the 134 cars and their 268 drivers and co-drivers hit the prologue track. It was cool to see the cars in action but it would not be until later in the afternoon that the first bikes hit the fine sand for their first run over the same loop.

With time to kill I checked out the 600-odd bikes that filled the pit area. Heading for the pits before the bikes hit the track



is a must-do and a great chance to see everything from the factory KTMs and Yamahas to the average punters' bikes, which ranged from your stock WR450Fs to polished CR500 and KX500 two-strokes that could easily take pride of place in a collector's shed.

It would be so easy to lose a couple of hours walking around the pits checking out the huge variety of bikes on display — and not just the race bikes, with plenty of decked-out DRs and Honda XRs lining the spectator car park.

One thing that did strike me was how much orange there was in the pits, proof for this event at least that winning on Monday sells bikes on Tuesday.

Being the 40th anniversary of the Finke, the organisers invited back every past champion and any of the riders who finished the original race back in 1976 for a demonstration race around the prologue loop.

Some sensational old bikes, including a Yamaha 250 and 500 from 1976, lined up against Toby Price's 2016 KTM 500 EXC race bike in this Legends event, and while the event was a “demonstration” ride, it

did not stop the old timers from pinning the throttle to the stop and showing what their bikes were made of.

With the demonstration over it was time to get serious. The top 20 riders lined up in an effort to top the prologue time sheets and so ensure a dust-free run to Finke.

THE DUST STARTS TO FLY

Twenty-fourteen race winner Toby Price was first off the line and quickly got up to speed on a track that had already seen the full field of cars and buggies run their sighting and prologue laps.

With my camera at the ready I was all set to capture my first Finke race. With my finger on the button, it was about to get real. Then things got all types of crazy.

As Price neared us one of the support vehicles, whose job it was to clear the track, was doing the complete opposite. The large 4WD was about to cause the hard-charging Price some issues, but with the crowd yelling at the driver to get off the track and DIRT ACTION's Damien Ashenhurst likewise waving frantically to the driver, the errant 4WD just cleared the



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Price had once again done the unthinkable, blowing the field away by more than eight seconds



track as the KTM ace blew by, completely unaware of any problem.

Over the next 30 minutes I watched through the viewfinder in awe of what these mad men and their dirtbikes were doing. What possesses someone to hit a series of knee-to-chest-high whoops on a blown-out dusty track while mid-corner with the throttle on the stop I'll never know, but these guys do it and it is a sight to be seen.

By the end of Prologue Price had once again done the unthinkable, blowing the field away by more than eight seconds. There were, however, a few fuming in the pits after Price had already had the chance to view the track during the Legends race while the sighting lap for the rest of the field was abandoned.

From second to 10th the time difference was only 10 seconds, with Wayne Carter the biggest surprise with the third fastest time in just his second attempt at the race, relegating to fourth one of the big pre-race favourites, Josh Green.

THE RACE BEGINS

Sunday arrived and my first chance to get out and see the race track had come. It is hard to describe what the first 70km of the track looks like, though from the comfort of a Hyundai i20 (perhaps not the best choice of cars for the occasion), the track did not seem overly tough.

It was not until I got up close that I realised just how gnarly the surface is and how many different changes in terrain

and obstacles the riders had to contend with.

With our spot picked out to shoot the lead riders — a nice whooped-out sand dune around 50km out — we sat and chatted with like-minded race fans while we awaited the race leader.

Then the moment arrived. A young fella bolted from the far side of the dune and yelled out, "they're coming". At the same time, the helicopter following the race leader came into sight and things suddenly got intense.

With the lens focused on the top of the dune I was waiting with great anticipation to see, presumably, Toby Price burst into



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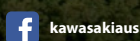
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FEATURE:

2015 TATTS FINKE DESERT RACE



sight cresting the rise. My heart rate was up, I had goosebumps from head to toe and it was easily the most excited I had been in a while to see a dirtbike at full speed.

As expected, Price was first into sight and the crowd erupted as he flew past and disappeared out of sight just as quickly.

Price was followed by Walsh, Green and then the rest of the top 20, with some noticeable absentees, namely Wayne Carter and NT's own Caleb Auricht, who had both crashed out of the race early in separate incidents.

After the first 50 or so riders had passed we jumped back into the car and headed down the track, looking for a few vantage points to shoot from and checking out some of the massive campsites that littered the route.

The campsites themselves were something to behold and ranged from

single family set ups to sites that resembled small towns, most of them having their own unique names and characters. It is not often you see a fully grown man in a chicken suit at a race meeting.

After stopping further out to snap a host of riders as they came past, we turned around and started heading back for the day — and that's when the other side of the big race reared its ugly head.

There is no doubt that the Finke Desert Race is a tough event and after seeing one rider being treated by medics and race fans at the side of the track around the 58km mark, we soon had to pull up ourselves and tend to another two riders who had taken heavy falls.

One rider had crashed and injured his shoulder and had then been collected by another rider who crashed heavily and knocked himself unconscious. Standing by him while he came round was a little

surreal as a bunch of complete strangers that included a police officer, a couple of moto journalists, race fans and even another competitor all banded together to ensure the downed rider was stable before moving him off the track and into some shade until the medics arrived.

With the riders in good hands we left the scene and then saw another three or four downed riders within another 50km. By race end on Monday afternoon well over 100 of the 600 riders who entered were out of the race, recording DNFs from either crashing, bike issues or not making the 4½-hour time limit.

At the conclusion of day one, Price had close to a five-minute lead over Walsh after making the run from Alice to Finke in one hour 54 minutes, some four minutes quicker than the time he posted in 2014.

The big movers on day one were Ivan Long, who worked his way from

sixth to third, and Tye Simmonds, who moved from ninth into fourth in his first Finke, just five seconds behind teammate Long.

THE HEROES COME HOME

The final morning of Finke was a bit strange. There really was nothing going on in the bike class until lunchtime and being based at the finish line I was reliant on radio updates to keep up with what was happening on the track.

Mixed reports filtered through and it was not until just after 1.30pm that the finish area started to come alive as Price entered the stadium section near the end of the track and appeared on the big screen in front of the thousands of fans and support crew who had converged for the big finale.

Price rounded the final corner and celebrated as he crossed the line, though the real excitement would not



More big news came with Tayla Jones crossing the line aboard her Yamaha YZ250FX in 27th outright and second in class

happen until he rode back into the finish area to join the rest of his team.

The human side of the event really comes to life as riders cross the line and head back to their support crews and the stories from the track start being told.

While the race looked like another start-to-finish cruise for Price, the truth behind his win made it even more remarkable. It appeared the KTM man went into the race with an injury after a stick penetrated his boot on the Sunday before the race, leaving him barely able to walk on a foot that resembled a balloon.

With Price safely home, the next finisher was his team-mate Tye Simmonds in a fantastic second place in his first attempt, the former top national MX racer letting out a huge roar and fist pump as he met up with his team. Active8 Yamaha's Josh Green, who spent 120km of his ride to Finke with a busted steering damper, picked up third outright and a class win.

The stories multiplied: David Walsh was out of the running with a blown engine; Jacob Smith moved himself up to fourth place followed by local Jack Dooley-McDonnell, who ran the entire race with minimal support; Ivan Long crossed the line with one hand off the bars — the South Aussie had crashed 70km after leaving Finke, cartwheeling down the track and breaking

two bones in the top of his throttle hand and yet rode a further 150km to finish sixth outright and third in class, giving his KTM Off-Road Team a clean sweep of the 451cc-and-over four-stroke class.

Beau Ralston and Lachlan Summers crossed the line next followed by Sam Davie, whose father we'd happened to bump into while cooking dinner at the motel's BBQ on Sunday night. Ryan Cossens crossed the line behind him, with Davie waiting in the staging area after the race for Cossens to come in to celebrate finishing alongside his mate.

EVERYONE'S A WINNER

While most of the men and women left the finish line after the top 10 finishers had passed by, I stayed and shot for as long as I could, continuing to watch and capture the reactions of riders — which really was one of the biggest highlights of the event.

Mark Sladek crossed the line in 13th outright to claim the Vets class win and then came Mark Grove, who took out Class 04 for up-to-250cc four-strokes, and 20th outright. They were followed by Master class winner Joel Stafford, while Murray Kurtis became the first two-stroke rider to cross the line in 23rd outright aboard his KTM 300EXC.

More big news came with Tayla Jones crossing the line aboard her Yamaha YZ250FX in 27th outright and second in class, becoming the first woman we know of to claim a podium result.

RETURN RUN PLANNED

For the rest of the afternoon and well after we had left the venue riders continued to cross the finish line, achieving personal milestones with plenty of stories to be told.

With racing over for the year, the event was capped off with the presentation on Monday night with every single rider and driver who finished receiving a medal in the form of a spike from the old Ghan railway, which the race course now passes over.

The Tatts Finke Desert Race is something you need to witness first hand. While I was lucky enough to have the chance to cover the event in my first-ever trip, there is no doubt I will be back for years to come.

There are so many facets to this huge event that it is impossible to absorb it all in a single year. Finke is one of the must-do events for any dirtbike fan, so do yourself a favour and start planning now to be in Alice Springs on the Queen's Birthday long weekend in 2016 for the 41st running of the event — either as a rider or as a spectator.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CLIVE WARD OF MOTORCYCLEBIZ

OUTBACK PREPARATION

Clive and Clubby are gearing up for an epic ride to the Flinders Ranges. But before they turn a wheel, Clive is wielding the spanners and wants to show you how they'll prepare for the trip into the Never Never.

Clubby and Lance organised a seven-day outback adventure back in 2010. I was able to join them for the journey and had a thoroughly enjoyable ride. We covered a very large area but because of time constraints didn't spend much time in any one spot. A recent conversation with Clubby led us to start planning another trip, and on this one we will travel around 3000km through the outback and Flinders Ranges where we expect to explore all that the area has to offer.

Should you be planning a long ride into a remote area, it's vital to do some bike preparation work, either by checking the basics yourself or by taking the bike to your mechanic and having a pre-ride inspection done. Make sure the mechanic is aware of the distance and terrain you expect to travel. If you're in doubt of a component's ability to last the distance, change it now; the best way to ruin your outback experience is to miss out due to a mechanical failure you could have anticipated.



THE CENTRE OF THE ROUND UNIVERSE

Grab each wheel with your hands in the 10 to two position and try to twist it. There should be no sideways movement. Next, remove the wheel and insert your fingers into the bearing and check that it spins freely and is free of any notches or flat spots. Make sure the seal is in good condition then re-grease around the seal and along the shaft before re-installing the wheel.

SUSPENSION

Gotta love ya legs

Check fork seals for leaks (forks should be serviced every two years — dismantled, cleaned and refreshed with new oil and seals). Check the rear shock for leaks and check the swingarm and linkage bearings (these should be removed every 20,000km and cleaned and greased). Now, with the rear wheel lifted on a suitable stand, grab the rear wheel and pull sideways. Ensure there is no movement at the swingarm to frame pivot point. Put the bike in gear and lift the wheel upwards. There should be no movement in any of the linkage bearing points nor the rear shock mounting points.

FUEL

Yep... it's kinda important

Finding fuel in remote areas can be a real problem. Plan your ride and be aware of the distances between fuel points as you may need to buy a Safari tank or carry a fuel bladder. For example, Innamincka to Birdsville is 537km with no fuel between them. It's also a good idea to call remote towns the week before and make sure they will have fuel — some places order in based on need.

LUGGAGE

Pack for the long haul

If you have bought new luggage, fit it and perform a test ride with it full prior to taking it on a long ride. Make sure all mounting bolts are tight and have been Loctited. Carefully inspect all mounting points for stress cracks. Make sure soft luggage and straps are clear of the exhaust system.

TYRES

Treat ya rubber right

What can I say? I'm not about to get into the argument about which are best, but be sure you have chosen good tyres and that they will last the distance you will be travelling. Carry a gauge and check your pressures regularly. Reduce pressures when travelling on gravel roads and reduce even further on muddy or sandy roads. Tip: Never go below 18psi if you don't have rim locks installed on your bike.

These are just some of the items which should be checked:

SPOKES

Not just a holder for footy cards

Check for loose, broken or bent spokes and then re-tension. Start on one side next to the valve and tighten each spoke ¼ turn at a time, then do the same on the other side. Repeat until all spokes are firm.

TOOL BAG

Prepare for the worst

Make sure you have enough tools to remove the wheel, the tank and your spark plug(s) at the very minimum. Carry a spare tube or two (even if your bike is tubeless, a tear in the tyre can be fixed with a tube), puncture repair equipment, spare spark plug(s), a pump, two tyre levers, some Quicksteel, cable ties and a good pair of pliers. It's also a good idea to carry spare brake, clutch and gear levers.

NUTS AND BOLTS

We all know a loose nut or two

Go over all the nuts and bolts on the bike, especially those exposed to high vibration, such as engine mounts, exhaust, rear subframe, luggage racks, centre and side stands. Torque them to the manufacturer's specifications. It's a good idea to carry a few spare nuts and bolts with you.

THE LONG ROAD AHEAD

The bikes we'll be using for the Flinders bash are identical long-term test bikes supplied by Yamaha Australia — XTZ660 Ténérés. These bikes are very familiar to us and ideal mounts for such a trip. Various modifications have been done to make the trip easier and safer. These include fitting emulators to the front forks and upgrading the springs front and rear to suit the extra weight we will carry.

This will be an unsupported trip, so everything we need will have to be on the bike. I'll be using Wolfman Saddle bags fitted to Adventuremoto universal racks with a Wolfman duffel bag attached to a rear rack. These items are dust- and water-proof and have been proven in the past to handle these conditions.

When packing, the idea is to put all the heavier items, such as tools and spares, into the saddle bags. This method has two advantages: it gives easy access to the essentials and puts the weight as low and centred on the rear axle as possible, helping steering stability. Pack all your lighter gear towards the top. Now get out there and explore this wonderful country. You won't be disappointed

BRAKES

Stopping... you'll miss it when it's gone

Ensure you have sufficient pad material left on each pad or brake shoe. Make sure the discs are free from cracks, are above the wear limit (limits are usually written on the disc) and free of excessive grooving. When replacing pads, always use sintered pads (for off-road) as muddy conditions can destroy organic pads in a day. Check brake fluid levels and fluid condition (brake fluid should be replaced every two years at a maximum). Only use the recommended brake fluid as per the specification on top of the master cylinder: Dot 4 means Dot 4; Dot 5.0 means Dot 5.0 — not 5.1. Using a higher-spec fluid doesn't improve your braking but may destroy the rubber seals in your brakes and cause failure of the entire hydraulic brake system.

BATTERY AND ELECTRICAL

Good connections

Check the battery terminals are clean and tight. Check the battery fluid level is correct and have a battery test performed if possible. Check all your lights are working and carry a spare headlight globe and fuses. Cable tie any loose or hanging cables neatly together.

COOLING SYSTEM

Fonzie would be all over this

Check the condition of all hoses. Take each hose between your fingers and squeeze. The hose should flex without making crunching noises or feeling too soft and gooey. Should you find a suspect hose, replace the entire set. Check all the hose clamps are tight and that the coolant is in good condition.

CABLES

Be a cable guy

Check and lube all cables. This includes the clutch, throttle and in some cases rear brake and de-compression cables. If you notice any frayed parts, replace the cable. Tip: Carrying spare cables is always a good idea. The best way to carry them is to mount and tape them to the cable already in place; that way, should you break one while on the road you just disconnect it and hook each end of the new one up without ever having to remove the tank or scratch around in your luggage for the replacement.

STEERING-HEAD BEARINGS

All too often overlooked...

To check the steering-head bearings, hold on the front brake and rock the bike backwards and forwards. Looking closely at the top of the headstock, watch and listen for any clunking or movement. Next, set the bike on a suitable stand with the front wheel off the ground and lightly turn the steering left and right, again feeling and listening for notching



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WORDS AND PHOTOS BY STUART DICKS

Western Australian TRAILRIDER reader Stuart Dicks recently posted some pics of his DR650 on our Facebook page and we immediately needed to know more about this beautiful beast. Stuart kindly filled us in on how he put his ride together and where he's taken it. This man loves his DR and we can see why!





My bike has a soul and spirit. It has been with me to places very few people in my life have ever been



The big ride journey on my 2003 Suzuki DR650 started in October 2014, lasted for 30 days and covered five deserts that included the Little Sandy, the Great Sandy, the Western, the Victorian and the Gibson.

It was one hell of a ride indeed. We covered 7800 kilometres and completed the job without a single puncture or mechanical breakdown.

Before that, in 2009, the DR took me right around Australia. It's also my daily ride. The clock has just registered 70,000 kays.

I bought the bike in 2008 and so the transition from stock to what you see here started way back then. I worked for Suzuki/Maico sales in South Africa during the 1980s and so am very one-eyed when it comes to my choice of ride. I love this bike as if it were a member

of the family. My wife has often asked, "Why don't you update to the latest model?" But to me that's like saying I need to give up on an old mate or relative, so it's never going to happen. My bike has a soul and spirit. It has been with me to places very few people in my life have ever been and has brought me home safely and trouble free. This bike and I share a loyalty to one another. We provide for one another and we

care for one another... and that's just the way it is.

All the mechanical work and maintenance I do myself. I use Silkolene Comp 4 10W50 oil for every 5000km service — the only internal work I've needed to do is adjust the valve settings as necessary. As for the rest, here goes with my mods and recommendations from the ground up.



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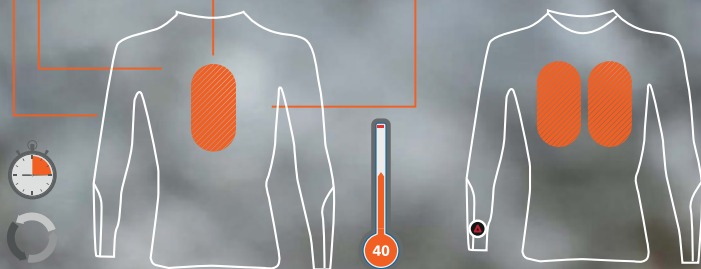


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STUART'S OTHER LOVE

Pictured here is my 1982 Maico 250 Alpha 1 MC, which I restored during a year-long strip-down and nut-and-bolt build. She flies like the wind and is as strong as I had one of these back in '82 and nostalgia got the better of me — I got sucked in BIG time... as one does.

THE BUILD THAT MADE THE MONSTER

Tyres: Dunlop D606 back and front enclosing Mefo Heavy-Duty tubes (3.5mm). The pair on the bike has so far racked up 11,500 kays. The sprocket ratio is 15/41 and I use a 110-link X-Ring chain.

Suspension: Upgraded heavy-duty fork springs and fork oil with an Eibach spring in the shock.

Fuel: I use a Safari 36-litre tank (yep, mine has expanded to this size — which is great!), with fuel filters leading off each fuel cock. The carby inlet has been twisted 90 degrees to allow the

full contents of the tank to be used. The stock rear mudguard was disposed of and a shorty fitted. There are small indicators at both ends, with the front pair fitted onto the headlight shroud. An Acerbis front fender pretties up the front. B&B bashplate and side alloy plates protect the frame from scuffing (they're excellent; they also stop the rubber frame grommets from going AWOL). I also fitted a centre stand which makes life so easy for stable parking (with all that luggage), and is a big help in the event of a puncture. I've lowered the footpegs 50mm for ride comfort.

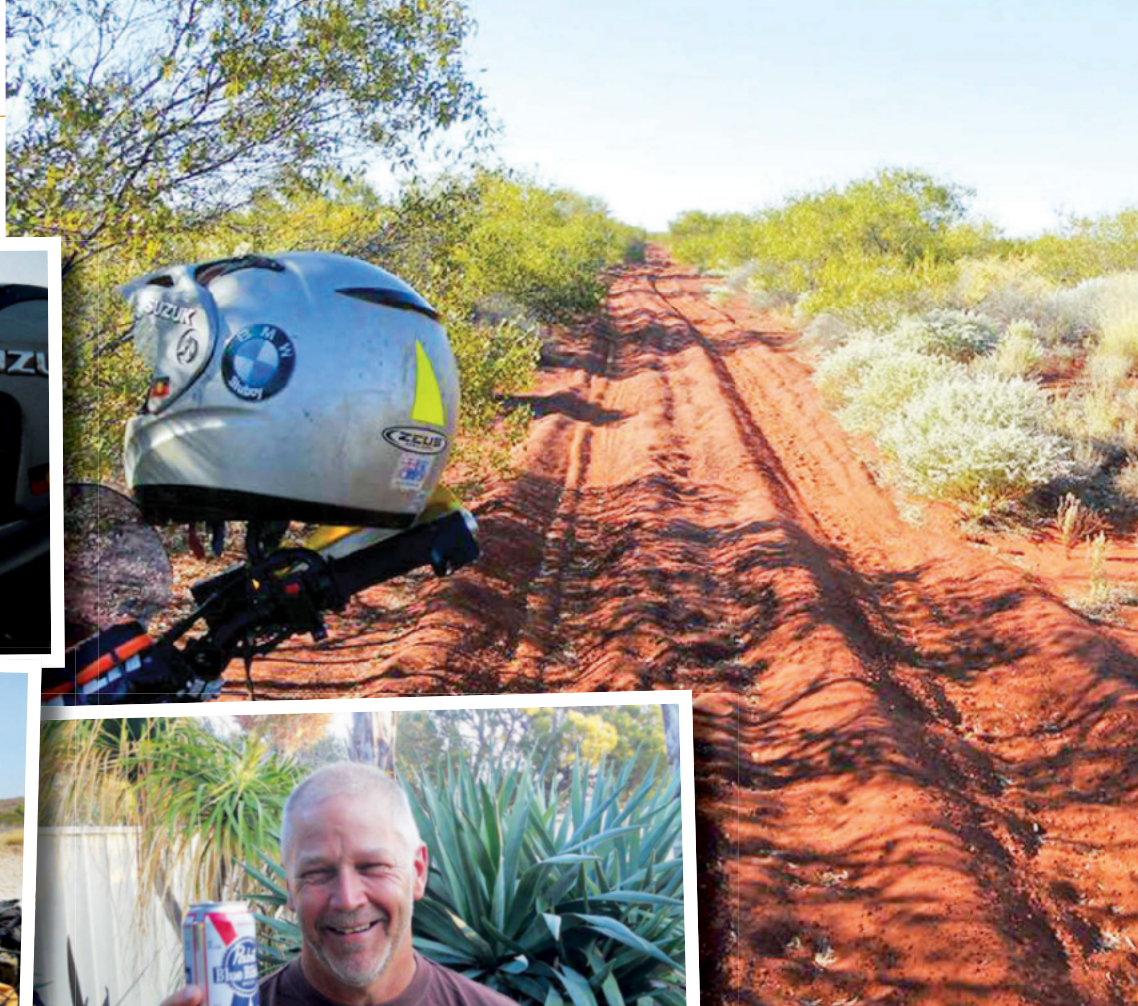
The Staintune exhaust system is brilliant, giving the bike an extra 6bhp and a throaty thumper note.

The flight deck has Renthal 767s and 50mm bar raisers. I'm six foot two (1.88m), so together with the lowered footpegs the bars make the standing/sitting pozzy very comfy indeed.

The grips are Progrips, which I wrapped up with foam Pussy grips to take all vibes and tingles away on those long 800+km days. I also have a cramp-buster throttle assist that allows me to exercise the fingers without dropping off the revs. Good old Ego Barkbusters are naturally fitted as well. An Eagle screen does the job it was designed for.

I fitted a 12V charging system for phone/iPod etc onto the side of the headlight shroud behind the Eagle screen. I also have an on/off switch to kill the headlight and save juice in





case I get stuck and have to crank the electric starter.

Also on the crossbar is my SPOT personal navigation system — a brilliant and necessary piece of equipment. While on the subject of worthwhile mods, I have a connection to an air compressor wired onto the battery. This system is near perfect and the compressor fits into the palm of your hand when connected. It's called a MotoPressor pocket pump. Check it out on YouTube pumping up a BMW 1200 GSA tyre!

One thing I always take on long rides is my AirHawk. The mini-cruiser size fits perfectly on the DR. He who rides a DR650 knows what I am talking about! At 56 years old, my arse deserves to be looked after. The pannier/carrier system I designed myself while a good

mate bent and welded the aluminium and put it all together. It is light (7kg) but tough — all up, there is 70kg of luggage pictured on the bike.

LAST WORD FROM A LEGEND

Australia is a truly beautiful country that encompasses so much. To all those wonderful folk I have met on my adventure rides, for the sharing of food, drinks and yarns, for the help in times of need, my DR and I offer thanks from deep in our souls.



The Staintune exhaust system is brilliant, giving my bike an extra 6bhp and a throaty thumper note

CAMBODIA DREAMING



Not too long ago we were contacted by Toby from Ride Expeditions who runs bike tours of Cambodia. Now, readers might be aware that we had a horror trip to Cambodia a couple of years ago and we don't want to go over the details again but it turned us off returning. That said, we knew Cambodia had plenty to offer and always wished we'd been able to see it properly. Toby invited us back to have another ride in better circumstances, but it wasn't possible. So he invited us to ask any question we like to get an idea of just how Ride Expeditions goes about its business in a pretty amazing part of the globe.





I have ridden around the country in October before and I think I spent more time in a boat than on the bike

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN
RUNNING TOURS IN CAMBODIA?**

We ran our first tour back in 2011. We started off small, with our booking office in the coastal town of Sihanoukville. For the first year or so we were mainly running day tours and short, two- or three-day trips around the south coast. In the following years the operations quickly grew into trips that ran over weeks, and which circled the entire country.

WHAT DREW YOU TO CAMBODIA?

I first visited in 2007 at the end of an around-the-world trip and I can honestly say it was my favourite of

the countries I had visited. It wasn't just the riding but the people that I fell in love with. Despite their traumatic recent history, the people of Cambodia are incredibly friendly and welcoming. Even in the remote villages in the middle of the jungle, where families are living in basic wooden huts and have no real possessions, they always greet you with smiles and will invite you into their home to wine (rice) and dine you. The children are happy and playing wherever you go, waving and cheering as you ride past — such a contrast to back home where the kids I know just want to play on their iPads.





HOW LONG ARE THE TOURS YOU RUN?

Our scheduled tours vary from one to three weeks, but we also run bespoke tours for any duration the client wants.

WHAT BIKES DO YOU USE?

We use Yamaha WRFs for more experienced riders and Honda XRs, which have all been put on a weight-loss program and treated to a few other necessary upgrades. Next year we are planning to add Suzuki DRZ400s to our fleet.

WHAT'S THE BEST TIME OF YEAR TO VISIT CAMBODIA?

The dry season runs from November through until May. My favourite riding months would have to be November and December — the rains have stopped but there's still plenty of mud about and the rivers are still high.

I'm from England so I grew up riding in wet, muddy conditions! The early months of the wet season bring similar

conditions. October is very wet. I have ridden around the country in October before and I think I spent more time in a boat than I did on the bike.

WHAT'S THE MAKE-UP OF THE RIDES — LEAD RIDER, SWEEPS, BACK-UP VEHICLES, CORNER-MAN SYSTEM ETC?

We only use the most experienced locals to lead our tours; our number-one guide has more than 15 years' experience leading tours around Cambodia. The knowledge of these expert local guides is invaluable to our business. They know their country better than we ever could and we simply would not dream of touring without them.

The sweep rider is also a trained medic who carries a substantial medical kit on the bike so, should someone have an accident up ahead, he will always catch up.

Depending on the group size, we will also have one or two



mechanics riding in the pack. The team all have two-way radios so we can alert each other if there is ever a serious problem.

The corner-man system is very important, and we give our riders clear instructions on how this works in the welcome talk before the start of the ride. Some of the trails we ride have a huge number of possible turn-offs so it would be easy to get lost if a reliable system like this were not employed. This system is brilliant because not only does it stop people getting lost, but it enables the group to spread out and it also rotates the riders so everybody has a chance to ride up front.

We have a support vehicle (driven by a second medic) that carries people's luggage, a second medical kit (along with an oxygen bottle and defibrillator), spare parts and a spare bike. This cannot always follow us on the trails, but it will usually meet us at lunchtime to provide us with a picnic.

HOW FIT DO YOU NEED TO BE TO FINISH A TOUR?

A good level of fitness is important, especially for the less experienced riders. It's the heat and humidity that people struggle with most, and this is something you cannot really prepare yourself for. It's fine when

you're moving, but as soon as you get to a section of trail that you find to be more of a struggle, the heat will hit you, hard. This is where good stamina will help you out a lot — and of course a member of our team will always be on hand to help if a rider is struggling on a particularly tough section.

WHAT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT?

The support rider is a UK-qualified medic who carries a large medical kit on his back and in saddlebags. He of course carries a satellite phone and all the riders' emergency contact and insurance information. Our course of action will depend on a number of factors: the severity of the injury, our location and the location of our support vehicle or other transport. All riders must have the appropriate travel insurance that will enable us to call in air support if necessary.

The driver of our support vehicle is an experienced local nurse, so he is able to look after any riders that opt to ride in the support vehicle due to illness or injury.

We donate a percentage of profits from each and every tour to a local charity called M'Lop Tapang





WHAT DOES THE COST OF A TOUR COVER?

Our scheduled calendar tours include airport pick-up, quality accommodation, fuel, breakfast and lunch on the riding days and all entrance fees and crossings on riding days. Excluded from the tour price are your personal flights and travel insurance, visas, evening meals (our riders tend to prefer this as it gives them more flexibility in the evenings) and other personal expenses.

HOW DO YOU GUYS DIFFER FROM OTHER TOURS IN CAMBODIA?

My partner and I have always wanted to 'give back' and help out the communities that we enjoy riding through so much. We donate a percentage of profits from every tour to a local charity called M'Lop Tapang, based in the coastal town of Sihanoukville. This is a fantastic organisation that helps get kids off the streets and into school. They do a brilliant job of tackling the problem, working from the top down — that is, they go to the families and address any issues that may have led to them sending their kids out onto the streets to earn money. Often, M'Lop Tapang will help a family start a small business in order to generate a sustainable income, and as part of the deal the family will agree to put their children into school. We have recently started a charity ride

with 100 per cent of the profits going to M'Lop Tapang. Next year's is scheduled for April.

We also sponsor a school in the north-east of the country, called 'Etoo', that provides learning resources, school uniforms, toys etc.

Besides giving back, our aim is for Ride Expeditions to have the highest of standards across the board. There are some good tour companies in Cambodia and there are some terrible ones. The reason we started this business is because we saw an opportunity — an opportunity to do everything right and become known for our quality service. Properly maintained bikes, high levels of safety, use of the best and most experienced staff and proper organisation are four areas where we believe we excel. One thing we say to our customers during the welcome briefing: "This is your holiday and you've put your trust in us — it is therefore our responsibility to ensure that it's the best it can possibly be." We understand the high standards that westerners expect and we do everything we can to deliver these. We like to think we go the extra mile to ensure a fun and varied experience for our riders, whether by organising birthday parties, visiting elephant sanctuaries, taking them along to local weddings, camping outside ancient temples... after all, it's not all about the riding!

SMOKEST INCS DAYS

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY DIRTRIDERZ

A group of dirtbikers come together over the internet to raise \$4500 for the Royal Children's Hospital Appeal.



In an initiative brought forward on a dirtbike forum (DirtriderZ), a core group of nine riders supported by two wives, four of their kids and three dogs set out to ride in nine of Victoria's most popular forests over nine days in a row. Each ride was supported and led by a forum member with solid local knowledge and on any given day another 10-15 forum members would join in the fun and support this very worthy appeal. It started more than a year ago, when two forum members went on a couple of rides and asked the participating riders to donate \$20 each to the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) appeal. That first year, more than \$1350 was raised. After a few drinks and a bit of a chat it was decided to try to super-size this fundraiser over the next few years — and super-size it they did!

The initial concept was simply to run nine different rides over the Easter break and keep going with what they'd already done: have a bit of fun and help raise a few dollars for the RCH. DirtriderZ is well known now in the dirtbike world for bringing together like-minded people in a safe and supportive environment, with a big emphasis on getting newer riders of all ages enjoying

the sport and learning together. 9 Rides in 9 Days grew from there.

IMPOSSIBLE? NAH!

As people from all walks of life put up their hands to help, a few riders decided that they wanted to have a crack at all nine rides. Were they mad? Most of the combatants were family men and all bar 'Twist' and 'DC' were well over 40 years old; did they really think their bodies and/or minds could keep up?

From the first morning the pace was on with 75 to 140 kilometres of technical terrain to be covered each ride. With that forest done it was time to pack up the gear, move on to the next and start all over again.

From Neerim to Yarra Glen, on to Kinglake and then off to Mt Disappointment. A quick stop at Cobaw, where more than 24 riders appeared for the 'Wombat' section, then over to Creswick and down to Anglesea. The big challenge then was a three-hour convoy back to Tallarook for day nine. Surely that was going to pull some up. It didn't.

GOOD CAUSE

With a shared total of more than 12,000 kilometres on the bikes and each of the nine principal riders travelling well over 650 kilometres in the car, this super-sized endeavour produced some very impressive movement.

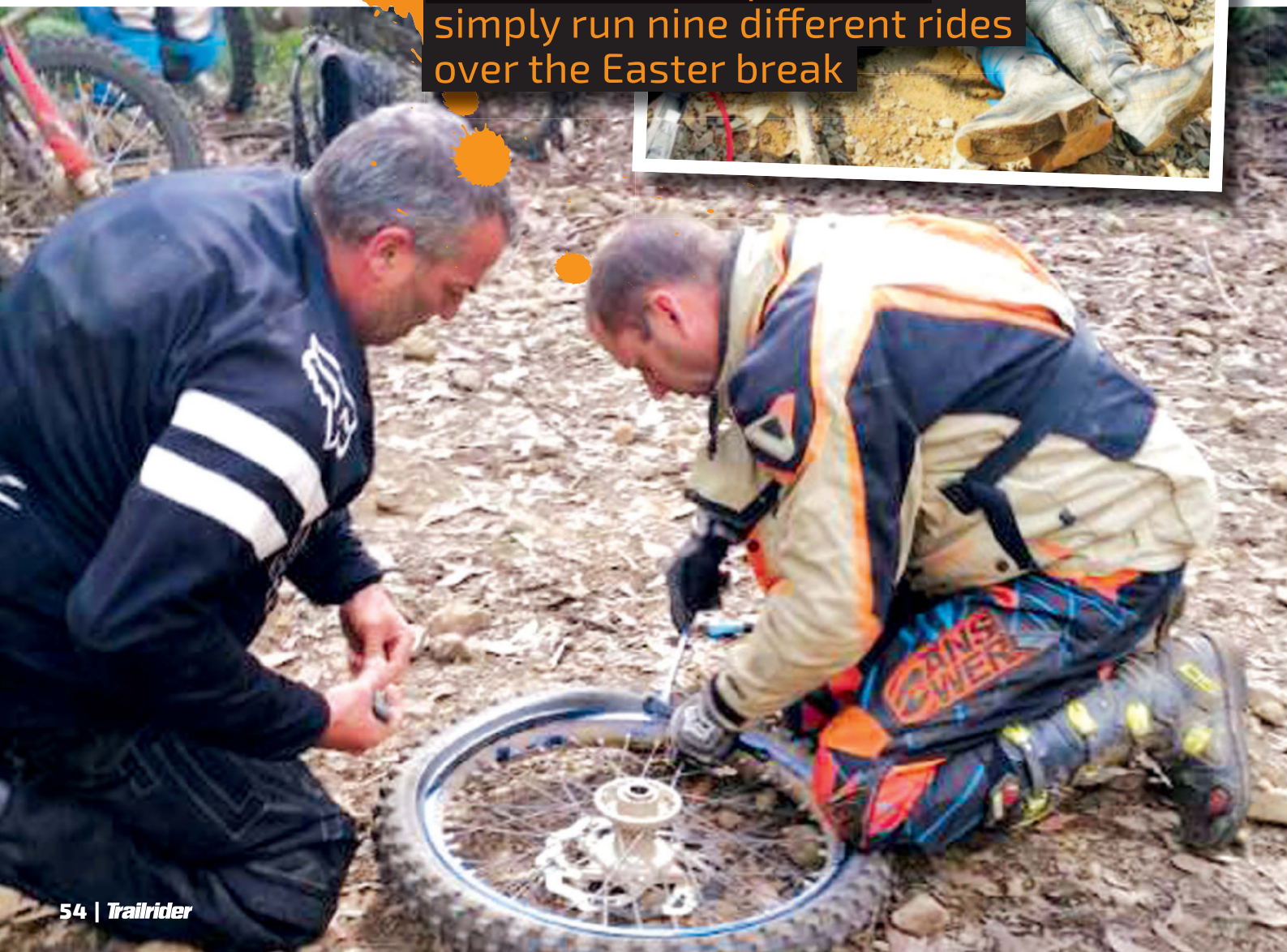
Many riders came to join in over the full nine days. Some stayed for just the

day, some for longer — but all came and went with a smile.

It's to the great credit of the DirtriderZ spirit and to its founder Geoffro that these people, these travellers, these dirtbike riders, came together as strangers over the internet with no common ground other than a love for the bush, the bike, and a desire and a willingness to protect and do the right thing by both, while supporting a great cause.



The initial concept was to simply run nine different rides over the Easter break



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Did they really think their bodies and/or minds could keep up?



REASON FOR RIDING

During the nine days the riders endured many a puncture, bikes were broken and repaired on site, tempers came and went without conflict, and friendships were born among adults and kids alike. A big shout-out goes to 'Tiny', who destroyed a bike one day and showed up the next with a new ride just to finish.

They rode through dusty days, they rode through rain and they slept in cars, caravans and swags. They ate on the trails and elsewhere when time allowed. Showers were at a premium and on the days they existed were gladly used by all. Across Victoria, families and homes were opened up to the riders and private properties were made

available for the kids to get a ride as well. Great comradeship was shown from riders across the state. I remember being stuck down a track at a log that was just out of my league and some guys who were also stuck, though not on the ride — or even the forum, asking: "You're not on that DirtriderZ crew trying for Nine are you? Good luck, fellas — go for it!" as they kindly helped me over...

At this point we all should remember that this is not an organisation. It's not a business, nor is it even really organised or put on by any one person. This is simply a group of like-minded individuals coming together to share their enjoyment of the bush and trying to do some good in the world. One of the lead riders has a tag that reads: I reckon if everyone owned a dirtbike, we could solve world peace! This ride, this trip, this experience makes me believe it!

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STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY: MATT BERNARD AND SPENSER DAWSON

250 COMPARO

Which motorcycle should you throw your money at or use to kickstart your life as a dirt-breathing trailbike rider? We took the Yamaha WR250R, the Kawasaki KLX250S and the Honda CRF250L for a day on the trails and some tar action to get our thoughts on each model back to back. Oh, and we had a pub lunch... just for good measure.

Taking three 250cc trailbikes for a day in the bush.



THE TESTERS

GRANT SAYERS

Age: 23

Occupation: Construction worker

SPENSER DAWSON

Age: 28

Occupation: Carpenter

MATT BERNARD

Age: 25

Occupation: Deputy Editor,
TRAILRIDER Magazine

THE TEST GROUND

A mix of road riding, gazetted dirt roads, sandy single trail, technical slow-speed rocky downhill and a few technical hill climbs.

THE COMPARO

This is not a motocross-style shootout. The idea is to test each of these bikes individually and go for a bloody fun trailride to see what's good and what's not so good about these 250cc machines. The terrain we tackled is chosen to reflect what the majority of riders will do on these bikes. There's no point launching big jumps or tackling ridiculous rock climbs; it's all about horses for courses.

THE MACHINES

Each of these bikes was supplied by the manufacturer, the Kawasaki KLX250S fitted with Barkbusters hand guards, the Honda CRF250L fitted with a CRF Racing bash plate and Barkbusters hand guards. The Yamaha WR250R was as off the showroom floor.



The first tricky little piece of track came in the form of a short and sharp rocky hill climb



LET'S DO IT

We each picked a steed and embarked on our day's trailride, starting with around 20km of winding sealed roads en route to the dirt road that would head into our little trail wonderland. The fresh autumn air had me wishing I'd grabbed an enduro jacket but glad I had the Honda and its hand guards. The Honda CRF250L is comfortable on the road; it's settled and the low nature of the bike makes it stable.

It sat on 100km/h fairly easily despite my 95kg frame and camera equipment. The Kawasaki had a far less comfortable front end at high

speed on the tar but its engine is also happy to sit at around 100km/h. The Yamaha has a noticeably higher sitting position which we found most comfortable on the road and has excellent road manners all-round.

I was bloody frozen by the time we arrived at the trails so we instantly darted into some single trail to bring the body temperature up. The WR250R found its own quickly with Grant on board and made light work of any rocks due to its ground clearance advantage. The Honda CRF250L has much less ground clearance and some extra weight — close to 10kg on the other

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With the best trail of the day in the bag, we decided it was time for a frosty ale



two — so it was important to pick lines and I certainly left some scrape marks on the undercarriage of the CRF Racing bash plate. The Kawasaki had no issues and the excellent brakes were instantly a hit with all of us.

The first tricky little piece of track came in the form of a short and sharp rocky hill climb. It wasn't overly difficult but you had to pick a good line. With plenty of revs the CRF climbed easily, as did the KLX, then the WR250R took it straight up the guts in the hardest, shittiest line there, all without a problem.

SWAPPED OVER

I jumped on the Kawasaki KLX250S after the Honda CRF250L and the extra seat height for me was a winner



THE MAIN POINTS

YAMAHA WR250R

Engine	Liquid-cooled DOHC 4-valve 4-stroke
Fuel management	Electronic fuel injection
Starter system	Electric
Fuel tank capacity	8 litres
Transmission	6-speed
Seat height	930mm
Wheelbase	1420mm
Ground clearance	300mm
Kerb weight	134kg with 8 litres of fuel

KAWASAKI KLX250S

Engine	Liquid-cooled DOHC 4-valve 4-stroke
Fuel management	Carburettor Keihin CVK34
Starter system	Electric
Fuel tank capacity	7.7 litres
Transmission	6-speed
Seat height	890mm
Wheelbase	1430mm
Ground clearance	285mm
Kerb weight	134kg

HONDA CRF250L

Engine type	249.6cc Liquid-cooled 4-stroke single
Fuel management	PGM-FI electronic fuel injection
Starter	Electric
Transmission	6-speed constant mesh
Wheelbase	1445mm
Seat height	882mm
Ground clearance	258mm
Fuel capacity	7.7 litres
Kerb weight	143kg

THE TRAILRIDER TOP 5

KAWASAKI KLX250S

- Strong brakes
- Comfortable ergonomics
- Nimble feeling in tight terrain
- Low seat height
- Modern looks

YAMAHA WR250R

- Off-road performance
- Responsive engine
- Suspension and handling
- Roomy cockpit
- Nice and light clutch

HONDA CRF250L

- Settled feeling on the trails
- Responsive turning
- Low seat height
- Cheapest to buy
- Minimal vibration on the tar

THE BOTTOM DOLLAR

HONDA CRF250L

\$5699 + ORC

KAWASAKI KLX250S

\$6299 + ORC

YAMAHA WR250R

\$7999 + ORC



straight away. The slightly taller bike made me more comfortable but it could do with some handlebar raisers when the rider's standing. It's not made for a tall rider, but in saying that I was comfortable to spend the next hour or so weaving in and out of the trees and through the single trail.

The bike is fairly narrow between the knees and the engine was enjoyable and had a little bit of spark when required. The suspension wasn't as plush as the Honda but it has more bottoming resistance and dealt with the hits better. However, it did throw a few little twitches my way. The suspension isn't far off the money, so I think more time on the bike and maybe some tweaks with the clickers — perhaps even getting a suspension tuner to work some magic on at least the forks — and you'd transform this bike into a more confident machine.

HOME RUN

As the tracks widened and the speeds picked up, I took my turn on the Yamaha WR250R. This bike really is in



a league of its own off-road; the engine is more powerful, the suspension more compliant and the machine more spacious in the cockpit. The bike has a more enduro feel to it and it's just that little more off-road-ready than the other two bikes — and it would also want to be, as it's more expensive than the Honda or the Kawasaki.

We followed this snaking sandy trail which featured some fun erosion mounds, some wicked flowing berms and a couple of switchbacks through the trees. It was an amazing little hidden gem of a trail and we all had smiles inside our helmets. The Yamaha might have handled the big hits that

little bit better and been that bit more powerful when I wanted to tip into a sandy berm, but we all had the same little-kid-at-Christmas smile plastered across our mugs and I think that's the most important thing. These bikes allow the average bloke a foot into the world of trailriding and each excels in its own area.

TO THE PUB

With the best trail of the day in the bag, we decided it was time for a counter lunch and a frosty ale to wash down the dust — and to discuss the bikes we'd just used to carve through some primo tracks and trails.

KAWASAKI KLX250S

SPENSER: "The Kawasaki wasn't my favourite on the road; the steering was a bit light, which then was good on the tight trails. It had really good top-end power when you had it revving. I liked how it was low, which helps me, being shorter than you two.

"The front brakes are very good, though super-touchy — I found that out a few times. The throttle response isn't quite as quick as the other two, though, being a carburettor bike and the others fuel-injected."

GRANT: "I've certainly ridden bikes that weren't as good out of the crate.

I stood up and could still reach the bars, though you'd have to run some higher bars on it and you'd be right on it if you were a fair bit taller than me. Those front brakes are very touchy; I found it diving a bit when you touch them. The bike got going once the engine was revving, but in the tighter stuff it was easy just to chug along in a gear higher without too much fuss or effort."

HONDA CRF250L

SPENSER: "The Honda handles really well. It's heavier and lower to the ground, which is great for me but maybe not for you taller blokes. I liked the brakes on the Honda; they were



We had an absolutely cracking day on these trailies and to me it was a real reminder as to why these bikes exist

The WR is more 70 per cent dirt, 30 per cent road and the other two are 50/50 road and dirt



still strong and had good feel, and weren't as touchy as the Kawasaki's, which I think is a positive.

"The engine was really smooth too; it hardly revved when we were riding back on the road. It would be the one to own if you were looking at doing a fair bit of road riding."

GRANT: "You could point and shoot it where you wanted it on those fire trails. I really did like the Honda. It was the most comfortable even though it was lower and smaller — most blokes at six foot won't be buying one of these anyway.

I felt like I was pedalling along pretty quick on the Honda in the single trails. The brakes are good, too. It felt really plush and I enjoyed riding it. On the road, you could put it in top gear and it hardly revved doing

100km/h, which is great as there's not much vibration."

YAMAHA WR250R

SPENSER: "It's much more like a serious dirtbike or enduro bike where the others are more suited to the entry-level rider. The Yamaha went nowhere near bottoming out when I was on it; I was much more comfortable on it when the tracks were a little bit more difficult. I don't look at the Yamaha as an entry-level bike when compared to the other two; it's that next step up."

GRANT: "It's just that bit higher; it has that much more power to pop-up and go over a log or something. I don't think I bottomed it out at all. It's certainly more of an off-road bike. I wouldn't get the WR if I were just

starting out or were short — it's a bit tall. If you were on the other two and got stuck you could easily put both feet down and get balanced or turn around. You might find a shorter guy wouldn't be as confident without being able to touch the ground easily if stuck on a hill — the bike would be on the deck a bit more often. The WR is more 70 per cent dirt, 30 per cent road and the other two are 50/50 road and dirt."

THE WASH UP

We had an absolutely cracking day on these trailies and to me it was a real reminder as to why manufacturers keep making them. Sure, we would have gone faster, hit stuff harder and tackled way more difficult trails riding on \$12,000 enduro weapons. But we had a bucket-load of fun

riding these 250 trail bikes and I was actually surprised at the terrain they were able to tackle without too much trouble. There are definitely blokes out there buying competition enduro machines who would get the job done on one of these and be less intimidated by their engines.

The Yamaha WR250R is a clear winner in the dirt when it comes to performance, but the low seat height of the Honda and the Kawasaki might suit riders new to the sport or very short. The Honda is a settled machine and the suspension makes for a comfortable and confident ride, though it is a heavier bike and has less ground clearance — definitely invest in a bashplate.

The Kawasaki has a very comfortable ergonomics package, very good top-end power and super-strong brakes. It's not as heavy as the Honda and still has a nice low seat height. If you are starting out in the sport have a look at both the Kawasaki and the Honda; but if you are looking for something a bit more capable off-road then the WR250R could be more your motorcycle, filling the gap between the entry-level trail bike and the competition enduro machine.

MUD AND GUTS

Brad Williscroft secures his ninth victory
in the muddy depths of Kamfari

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MAX SULLIVAN

Pitstop, Kamfari style —
water, goggles, fuel, gloves



Chris Warwick — next stop Romania



Some help? Anyone? Anyone?

It was cooler than usual this year when I walked off the plane at midnight in Darwin. I could tell, as my mate "Fats" was wearing a T-shirt and not the usual singlet when he arrived to pick me up. The dry season had started a little early and with the overnight temperature an unseasonably low 21 degrees, I had the most pleasant night's sleep in the seven years I've been attending the Kamfari. Daytime temperatures were still mid 30s and humid but just a tad lower than previous years. Would the dry weather and low water levels affect the Top End's "Muddiest Enduro"? Time would tell.

If you haven't been up to Australia's Top End, it's well worth a visit. I love coming up each year for the C&R Constructions Kamfari as it is the most unusual race I've attended anywhere in Australia. The hot, humid weather, the huge crowds, the friendly atmosphere and the muddiest enduro course you have ever seen all add up to something special. The countryside is magnificent and the flora has to be seen to be appreciated. Beautiful pandanus palms, waterlogged paperbarks and rugged spear grass turn the swamps into an eye-catching

scene. Just don't wear your Sunday best, because you get so close to the action you will be wiping the mud off your teeth.

At 10am sharp on the Sunday morning, the bush serenity was broken as 62 bikes fired into life and raced towards the first of many bog holes that adorned the 13km lap. Brad "Wonka" Willisroft was out to secure his ninth title and his race quickly turned to crap as the front wheel of the KTM 450exc sunk deep in the mud, throwing Wonka over the bars. Daniel McInnes slipped past Wonka and then had his own battles with slower riders as he pulled off daring passing manoeuvres in a bid to take back-to-back victories. Meanwhile, extreme Enduro

enthusiast Chris Warwick had an amazing start on the Sherco 300 and quickly pulled time on the rest of the field. Chris has been a regular on the podium, so would 2015 be his year?

Anything can happen during a four-hour enduro and Kamfari is no exception. Just when Warwick thought he had a handy lead on lap one, a cautious creek crossing turned his world upside down as the Sherco 300 drowned. Ten minutes later he was back in the race, but had lost around nine positions. Chris got away with that mishap pretty easily compared with some riders. Luckily competitors and marshals are more than

Lucky it was drier this year





Wonka en route to victory

willing to lend a hand, as extracting a bike from these quagmires requires more than one pair of hands.

By the end of the first lap, Daniel McInnes had managed to take the lead with local rider Daniel Carty close behind in second. Wonka had made it up into third place and made an unscheduled pit stop to change gloves and goggles that were now covered in sloppy mud. After another 13km McInnes was still out in front, pulling a little time and looking good for those back-to-back wins. Wonka had meanwhile caught Carty who now dropped to third and was being hunted down by Mick Halliwell and Kamfari virgin Scott Campbell. Scott had travelled all the way from Sydney to experience first hand the infamous mud race that he'd so often read about.

Chris Warwick had already booked his flight to Redbull Romaniacs but right now he was hell bent on catching the leaders. Chris loves extreme riding and it showed when he



Wonka took the bull by the horns yet again



Scott Campbell on his way to fourth outright

hit the wide-open mud flats. While some riders choose their lines carefully, or stick to the spear grass at the track's edge, Chris has the philosophy of hold it wide and let it slide! It might not be text book but crieke it's impressive to watch, as more often than not it works. Being a Darwin local may have something to do with it.

McInnes's RMZ450 was working well and up to the two-hour mark he had held his lead, though now with Wonka's KTM right behind him. Warwick still had the Sherco tapped out and had managed to move into third — though his efforts were not without incident as his missing headlight indicated.

Scott Campbell was now leading the rookie class and the VETS as he slipped up into fourth outright.

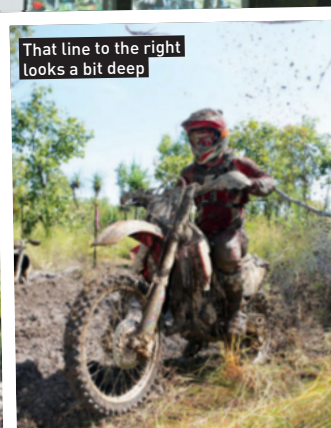
Halfway around lap six, Wonka made a move on McInnes and used the dry section to his advantage. He now had a 2km trail section through picturesque

paperbarks and left a trail of dust in his wake. He pulled out time on McInnes and from then on, Wonka settled in and slowly increased his lead. The former KTM off-road team manager was closing in on a possible ninth Kamfari victory, just one short of equalling Tony Morris's record.

By now stricken bikes were scattered throughout the entire course and served as a constant reminder to those still mobile to be on guard the whole time. Kamfari can catch out the best. What looks like an inch of water could turn out to be a mud hole deep enough to swallow a bike whole.

Through the last of the deep mud sections right at the finish line, the massive crowd cheered as the marshals did their best to direct bikes to the best lines. Not everyone believed them and some chose their own lines, hoping for the best.

Wonka was taking no chances despite a 10-minute lead as the four-hour cut-off



That line to the right looks a bit deep

KAMFARI TOP TEN

01. Brad "Wonka" Willis
02. Daniel McInnes
03. Chris Warwick
04. Scott Campbell
05. Mick Halliwell
06. Daniel Carty
07. Kurt Baxter
08. Adam Clay
09. Aidan Chamberlain
10. Rodney Black

neared. He pulled into the pits for one last splash of fuel before tackling the last lap. Victory was close, but not close enough to drop your guard. McInnes pushed on but couldn't make up time and so the Darwin rider's dream of successive wins died.

At the four-hour mark, many of the 3500-strong crowd watched the flag marshal. Eight minutes later a KTM with number 82 barely visible under layers of mud crossed the line. Brad "Wonka" Willis had done it yet again. McInnes held on for a well-deserved second while Warwick was ecstatic at his come-from-behind third place. New South Welshman Scott Campbell finished fourth outright and ended up taking home a swag of trophies. No doubt Wonka will be back next year looking for win number ten in the Kamfari's 45th year. I know I will be back.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY
CRAIG BERNARD

top 10

There's a lot to like about the big Yamaha, we pick our top 10 on the super 10.

1. ADAPTABILITY and VERSATILITY

I keep coming back to how easy the Ténéré has been to gear up, throw a leg over, hit the tar and then head for the hills for some dirty time. Alternatively, the big Yam offers a quick spin through the twisties chasing a mate or, with panniers loaded and the missus on board, a dirty weekend of another kind.

2. TECHNOLOGY

I love being able to flick through data like temperature, fuel range and average fuel consumption as well as the flexibility of switching power and traction modes in the wet or soft stuff. Cruise control is an unreal way to relax for a while and let your mind wander to things other than worrying about your licence points.

3. SIT OR STAND AND DELIVER

Being a lanky arse I was really struggling to get to a stage where I wasn't thinking about my body position with the transition from seated to standing. What a massive fan I am of both the Pivot Pegs and the Roxspeed bar risers. After a big day for an outa-shape digger like me, combining a few hours of the hard stuff followed by a variety of sand, fire trail and single track, I realised how effortless it had been.

4. PACK 'N' SEND

The lockable, easy on/off Yamaha panniers and top box not only look the goods in satin black they also swallow a whole lotta livin' for a long weekend away. Even the bride approved being able to pack the mandatory

straightener and hair dryer. For easy day rides the top box alone doubled as a backrest for her with heaps of room for some basic tools and extra gear for any season changes.

5. SUPER STOPPERS

When the time comes to pull up on this big girl there's a lot to stop, especially two up with full luggage. But I have to say the brakes were never lacking. With the benefit and peace of mind of ABS and ease of Yamaha's intelligent unified brake system, even emergency braking is confidence inspiring.

6. SNEAKY SWITCH

Having the switch fitted to lock out the ABS and traction control for the fun factor in the bush brings a massive smile to my dial every time. Be warned though: 1200cc lights up quickly, so respect is warranted.

7. NO CLING-ON KOALAS

Passenger feedback was all good once the seat had softened a little. Sue loves the body position and feels super comfy on the gripper-style seat with the assurance of the top box just behind.

8. DIRT-A-BILITY (is that even a word?)

I've ridden a few different adventure bikes but by no means am I a seasoned adventure off-roader. I did find the Ténéré does really feel like a dirt bike in the tighter stuff, if heavier and harder to pull up. This was backed up by my mate Mark who came back with the same feelings after we swapped bikes [no, I'm not telling what he rides].

9. BURN BABY BURN

If it's power you want, it's power you get. There is heaps on tap with two modes to choose from when you want to tone it down a bit or conserve fuel. As I mentioned, respect is needed in the loose stuff but there is heaps when you need it if you're loaded up or when you need to dispose of that Sunday driver before the 35km of winding road sign.

10. LOOKIN' THE GOODS

It's pretty cool when people come up and want to know more about the bike while massaging it with their eyes; there is always plenty of interest wherever the Ténéré is parked. And I have to agree with them: this is one pretty mean-looking off-road machine, enhanced by the colour scheme, subtle graphics and even the wide bright eyes of the Acerbis hand guards.





With the benefit and peace of mind of ABS and ease of Yamaha's intelligent unified brake system even emergency braking is confidence inspiring.

WORDS AND PICS BY GREG SMITH

MORE BANG AND LESS BUCK

Settling the suspension and igniting the powerplant

With enough time in the saddle to understand the KLX intimately and know what I want to achieve, I've found a few things that niggle at my sense of calmness while dodging the trees on a weekend. One of those key points was the suspension — it's way too under-sprung. Yes, it's a trail bike but most riders considering buying one of these probably don't weigh 70kg; they'd be more likely to come in around the 100kg mark fully kitted up for a ride. The next area of modification is the engine, "notably" (pardon the pun) the exhaust. It was my mission to make sure I changed these two areas to make them more suitable for the single-track/fire trail (70/30) riding I've been doing since

receiving the bike. These two things combined would make it easier to ride — and would outpace my mates on the trail. Well, at least it sounds good.

SUSPENSION

When I was in a pickle and needed a hand with the KLX's suspension I approached David Burnett of Suspension Matters to see if he could help out with the sedately controlled valving while also replacing the springs with something more suited to my weight and riding style. His business is in the Sunshine Coast's Glass House Mountains, where Dave has loads of test riding facilities on hand to help.

After I'd been weighed and told him just how hard I ride and how many trophies I'd never earned he immediately settled on a valving set-up for me. "How

about we do something along the lines of what Kirk Hutton runs?" he said. "Yeah, that sounds good," I thought. "I'm nearly as old as him."

He then asked me a few sneaky little questions that pinpointed my real ability and desired comfort level and understood there was a far more realistic setting for me.

As I stripped the bike of the bouncy stuff at each end, Dave started to perform his magic. First, he measured the springs to see what they were exactly. He then pulled the valving apart, carefully laying out the components like a jigsaw puzzle. It wasn't the first time he'd done this and before too long the forks were reassembled with new valving, plus a little secret internal modification and a set of Race Tech Gold Valves to offer

superior bottoming resistance while retaining a plush, controlled ride. The standard fork springs are rated at 0.44kg/mm. These were replaced with 0.47kg/mm rate springs. The rear shock has also had a few enhancements internally plus a Rebound Separator Valve that will help the bike feel less vague in wide-open trail G-out sections. The stock rear spring is rated at 5.0kg/mm and has been replaced with a 5.6kg/mm spring.

Since Dave's work, the bike now feels so much more balanced on wide-open trails and less prone to wallowing and diving at high speed. The bike also sits up in the stroke now, allowing it to stay lower in ruts for longer without having to fit it to stay low. The suspension action under brakes is so much better and even during hard braking across tree roots there isn't any of the harshness that I used to feel. All in all it's a massive improvement and one that should help me stay upright.

PRO CIRCUIT EXHAUST

I couldn't find an exhaust system off the shelf, so Kawasaki came to the rescue with a full Titanium Pro Circuit T4 exhaust. Kawasaki also threw in a few carburettor components to help tune performance with the new system in place.

After removing the original exhaust from the bike,



yes, I needed a rest! That muffler weighs a tonne. Seriously, it's far too heavy and needs to be replaced if you own one of these; and I'd do that before you set up your suspension. I suggest that you look into Forestry-certified exhausts for the KLX as the Pro Circuit exhaust I'm using is still on the loud side of acceptable (but only just, thankfully). The difference with the new system fitted is amazing. It finally allows the engine to breathe and it pulls like a train. With more bottom-end torque plus a little more top end, I'm going to try the 49-tooth rear sprocket as the engine will pull it for sure, and will need fewer gear changes in tight trees.

Just fitting the exhaust would probably see a set of exhaust valves

needed within a couple of rides as the engine needs a lot more fuel to operate properly with that new system. After consulting the guys at Kawasaki I fitted the advised jetting from the supplied JD Jetting kit (Red Needle on the 3rd clip, 165 main and a 45 pilot). I also made the trek to my local bike shop to get an externally adjustable air screw. Once fitted, I found that 2½ turns out was the best way to keep the motor running smoothly. The bike now starts easily whether bone cold or red hot and runs smoothly right through the range. As old timers say, it's as good as a bought one!

BLINKERS

I was unable to find factory blinkers and the wiring harness so I did a bodgy job of creating something that would get me by while riding on public roads. Yes, I do realise that this may well be illegal but at least I tried to stay roadworthy, right? I went to my local electronics shop and bought a set of LED stick-on light strips (now mounted on the Barkbusters) plus an LED compatible flasher and some wire to make them work. I borrowed a set of standard-style LED rears from a mate and wired them up via a switch on the bars. The system works off the battery as it's 12 volts.

With 24 hours' riding time since the last update the oil and filter have been changed as well as numerous air filter cleans and the odd chain adjustment just to keep the big girl purring along nicely.

One thing that hasn't gone so smoothly for the bike this month was a broken headlight that was the result of a cross-rut altercation with a tree at 30km/h. Needless to say, I kicked at the tree trying to blame it for my stupidity but all I did was hurt my foot. At least the speedo/tripmeter was undamaged. The gear lever was bent so badly that it downshifted when I stood on the pegs. I managed to find a new lever and we're now back working at 100 per cent.

The tyres are a little low now but I'm more than impressed with their mileage and the fact that they still offer rideability when down to 50 per cent tread depth. For those who don't want to flick back to last issue here are the details: Front — Pirelli Scorpion XC Mid-soft; Rear — Pirelli Scorpion XC Mid-hard. I only need one more ride out of them this weekend before I change them to something a little softer to help make the suspension shine even more.

Thanks for reading, and if you have any questions, suggestions or information just get in touch with us via the Facebook page and we'll do our best to get back to you.

The bike feels so much more balanced on wide-open trails and less prone to wallowing and diving at high speed.

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THE SINGLE CUFF

This one is great for bad hair days and casual office settings. Cuff the beanie once and wear on the top of your head, with the beanie resting halfway down your ears.

THE STEVE ZISSOU

The classic fisherman's look is now a hipster mainstay. Roll or cuff the beanie twice, and wear at the top of your head. You can wear it forward or back depending on whether you want your hair to show from underneath.

THE HIGH-TOP

This look says, "I'm not cold, I'm cool." Wear the beanie as far toward the top of your head as possible. Let it rest above your ears, keeping it vertical and well rounded throughout.

THE ROBIN HOOD

If you're feeling inventive, leave the beanie uncuffed in the front and cuff once in the back. The cuff should form an angle that starts and stops at either ear.

THE DAVID BECKHAM

For that unaffected, too-cool-for-school look, wear the beanie as far back as possible, letting the extra fabric slouch in the rear. Cover your ears and allow some hair to tuft out in the front.

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HOW-TO TIPS AND TESTED GOODIES

BACK PACK

TRIED AND TESTED

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POINT YOUR BIKE AT
THE MOUNTAINS AND
LET'S JUST RIDE

TRIED AND TESTED

The gear and gadgets that get used and abused during our dirtbike duty



ACERBIS SHARK BOOTS BLACK

If you're after a pair of boots on a budget, Acerbis Sharks are certainly a good option to look at. They carry a very small price tag but feature plenty of quality and are comfortable to hit the trail in. I've been wearing the Sharks for a few months now and they took a few rides to really come into their own as they were a little stiff to start with. But now they've bedded in they're a good pair of heels to get your feet into. The aluminium four-buckle system works well and has a quick-release/locking system. The boots do fall short in comfort and mobility when compared to a \$500 pair, but at \$179.95 they'll offer a heap more protection than a pair of work boots and are certainly worth investing in if you're getting into trailriding and trying to keep the costs down. I certainly recommend them. Want the next level in Acerbis? Check out the X-Move 2.0 boots at www.mx1australia.com.au.

– Matt Bernard

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ENDURA SPORT GELS

If you are someone who struggles late on a trailride, give Endura's Sport Gels a whirl. They will help with that last half hour of your ride and I've found they reduce cramps and soreness. They keep your glycogen levels up, taste OK and fit easily in your CamelBak. Ensure you drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and stomach cramps. – Matt Bernard

DIRECTIONS FOR USE

For best results, consume one 35g serve (1½ tablespoons or 26.4ml) or one sachet 15 minutes prior to exercise and every 30 minutes with fluid to prevent glycogen depletion and energy loss. Take again directly after exercise to aid recovery. Endura Sport Gels not recommended for children, pregnant or lactating women and people sensitive to caffeine. Always consume ample water to avoid dehydration.



REID XENON 29ER MOUNTAIN BIKE

We've been fortunate enough to have the guys at Reid Cycles supply us a Xenon 29er Mountain Bike for review in TRAILRIDER and so far we're loving hitting the trails with some pedal power. I came across Reid Cycles when looking for a second-hand on Gumtree. I have some great mountain bike trails close to my house and thought it crazy not to get in there and have more of a go and get fit at the same time. A quick fact check on the Xenon shows a very impressive line of components, which sparked my interest in the model. Features include Suntour XCT fork with 100mm of travel, Shimano shifters, Tektro hydraulic discs and double-wall alloy rims. So far I've only had a couple of spins on the bike, so stay tuned for more when we get better trail time on the Xenon 29er. – Matt Bernard



LEATT GPX 5.5 NECK BRACE

I've always struggled to wear a neck brace while riding in the bush, finding it difficult to look ahead on steep hills and get comfortable on long downhill. The Leatt GPX 5.5 doesn't offer the same restriction and I can now ride confidently and comfortably in the trees. The Leatt GPX 5.5 neck brace is engineered by a doctor and bio-medical specialists. It's made of fibreglass-reinforced polyamide. The helmet rim striking platform has been designed for increased head and helmet freedom, which for me is one of the biggest positives about the new design. It offers five-way adjustability to ensure a perfect fit. The rear of the neck brace has been redesigned both to work with the body's natural movements and to snap off before excessive force is applied to the back. On one side of the brace you'll find an easy-action emergency release for use in the event of an accident, while the collarbone cut-outs keep the brace away from that area in an accident. For me, the new Leatt 5.5 GPX brace has certainly taken another step forward in neck brace design and eliminated some of their shortcomings. — **Matt Bernard**



MX1 AUSTRALIA STUBBY HOLDER

A product review on a stubby holder? OK, not really. This just keeps ya tinny cold on a hot day or your hands off your cold beer on a cold day — but hey, it looks very cool. The MX1 Australia Stubby Holder is a must-have item for the overnight trailride — get onto one. — **Matt Bernard**

POD MX K8 ULTIMATE KNEE BRACES

A good knee brace will help allay the worry of injury when you're out riding, as well as build confidence in the safety of your lower legs — just as a good pair of boots will.

For a few years now I've entrusted my knees to the Australian brand Pod MX by using their original knee braces. Although practical and long-lasting (they're five years old) they are bulky and the Velcro straps caught on my pants all the time.

Now I've been fortunate enough to try a pair of the new MX Pod K8 Ultimate braces. The first thing I noticed was how snugly they fitted. My old braces must have needed a refurb but they felt right because I used them so often. Make sure you measure your legs and try on a set before buying the size you think is right for you.

The look and feel of the new braces is second to none and the comfort level is a 10 out of 10, with better strap thickness helping not to chafe or pinch your skin. I haven't needed to increase the lockout angle but did note how easy it is to adjust. The two main frames are made from carbon fibre with both the upper and lower cuffs made from a flexible high-impact resistant plastic that moulds to your leg through strap tension. There are four straps, each numbered to help you fit the braces in the right sequence. All the foam linings are removable for washing. On the bike they feel extremely thin and don't affect my riding position. Another plus is that the straps don't continually pull the liner from my pants when taking them off.

Having woken up with a sore knee in times gone by, I strongly recommend using knee braces to help limit any unnecessary pain on a Monday morning. If you can't afford the new K8s, make sure you look at the K300s but please don't ride without knee protection. — **Greg Smith**





TOP 6 TIPS FOR STOPPING PERFORMANCE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CLIVE WARD FROM MOTORCYCLEBIZ

There are lots of parts on your dirtbike that require routine maintenance, but while you can get away with less than regular attention on some, brakes should always be properly and thoroughly serviced. Discovering a lack of strong, controlled braking performance at the end of a long, high-speed straight or while picking your way down a steep and gnarly slope is not a good plan. Modern disc brake systems offer sensational stopping power and control. With regular TLC, you can rest assured they won't let you down.

1: DISC ROTORS

Check your rotors for three things. First, make sure they are above the minimum thickness (this measurement is often engraved on the disc or

given in your owner's manual). A badly worn disc will often have a lip on the outer edge, making caliper removal difficult. Second, check that the disc isn't warped. With the bike on a stand, kneel in front and slowly rotate the wheel: the disc should not move from side to side. If it does, it will push the pads away from the disc, requiring the lever to be pulled in further before braking starts. Third, check the rotors for cracks and heat-spotted or scored disc surfaces. Scores and heat spots will reduce friction and poor braking performance will result. Replace rotors displaying any of the above issues and then fit new pads (new rotors come with a wax covering to stop rust, so make sure you clean the new disc thoroughly with brake cleaner before fitting).

2: CALIPERS

Remove the caliper and inspect for leaks. Lever the pistons back into the caliper; they should move smoothly and freely. Stiff or seized pistons will reduce braking performance and a caliper overhaul is required to rectify this. Check the caliper slides freely on its slide pins, and check the rubber covers are not perished. Pull back and grease inside.

3: BRAKE LINES

Check all lines for damage, ensure all the routing clips are in place and the lines don't rub on anything through the full movement of the suspension.



DOS AND DON'TS

DOS: Always use the specified brake fluid. If the manufacturer specifies Dot 4, use only that. Use sintered brake pads.

DON'Ts: Never leave brake fluid in open containers. Brake fluid is hygroscopic and will absorb moisture from the atmosphere, drastically reducing its effectiveness and causing corrosion within the brake system. Never push caliper pistons back in without cleaning first. Never allow air to enter the system while replacing fluid; it can be hard to bleed out.

4: DISC PADS

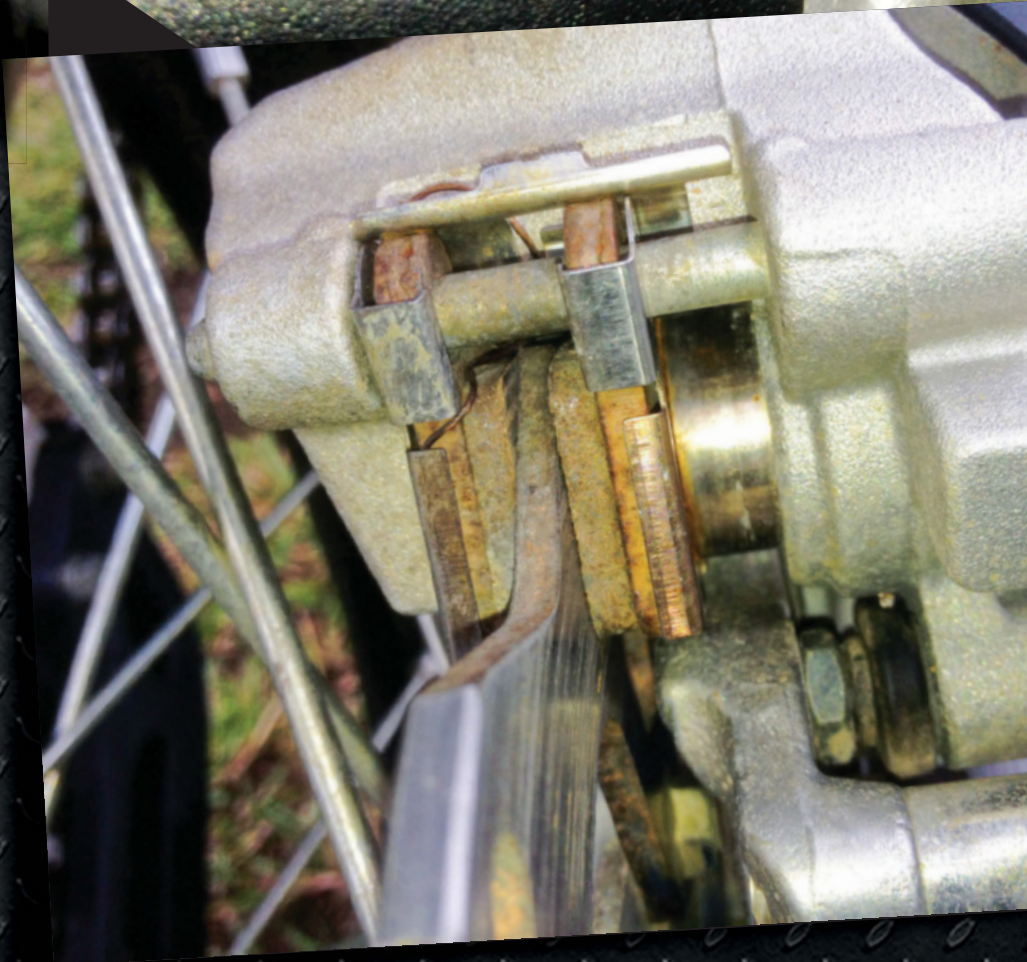
Check the brake pad friction material; replace any pads showing 1mm or less. Always use 'sintered' pads for off-road use, as muddy conditions will destroy organic pads within a couple of hours. Ensure wear is even between pads on the same caliper. Uneven wear could be due to a seized caliper piston or seized caliper slides.

5: BRAKE FLUID

Ensure fluid level is above the minimum (most master cylinders have a sight glass). Replace fluid every two years, regardless of use. Completely drain and then flush fresh fluid through the entire system. Finish off with a bleed and ensure you remove all air from the system. A spongy feel at the lever usually means you still have air in the system.

6: LEVERS

Check lever adjustment. Ensure they are at the correct heights and not adjusted so much that the brakes start to drag. Replace any bent or broken levers; you can always carry a bent one as an emergency spare.



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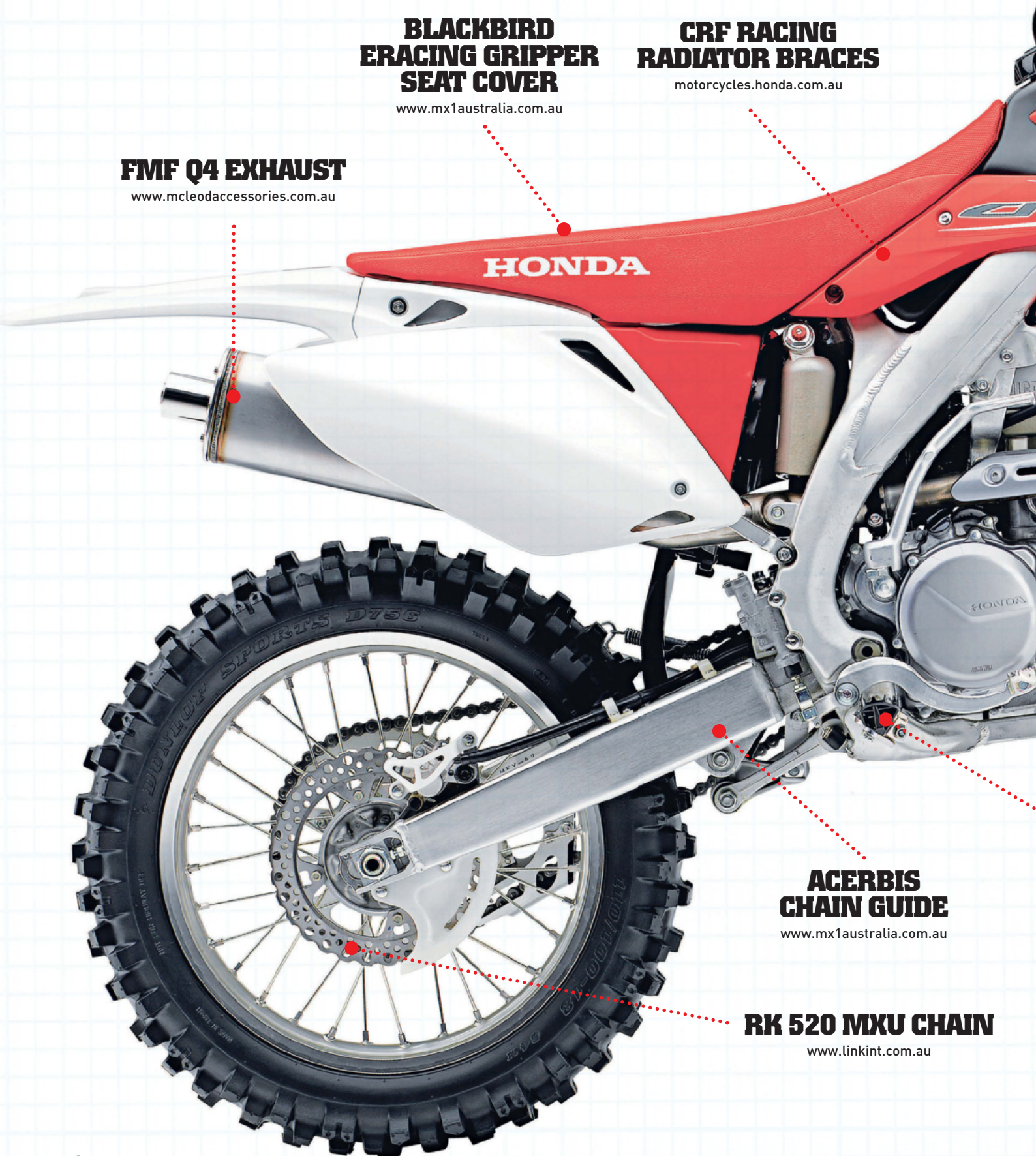
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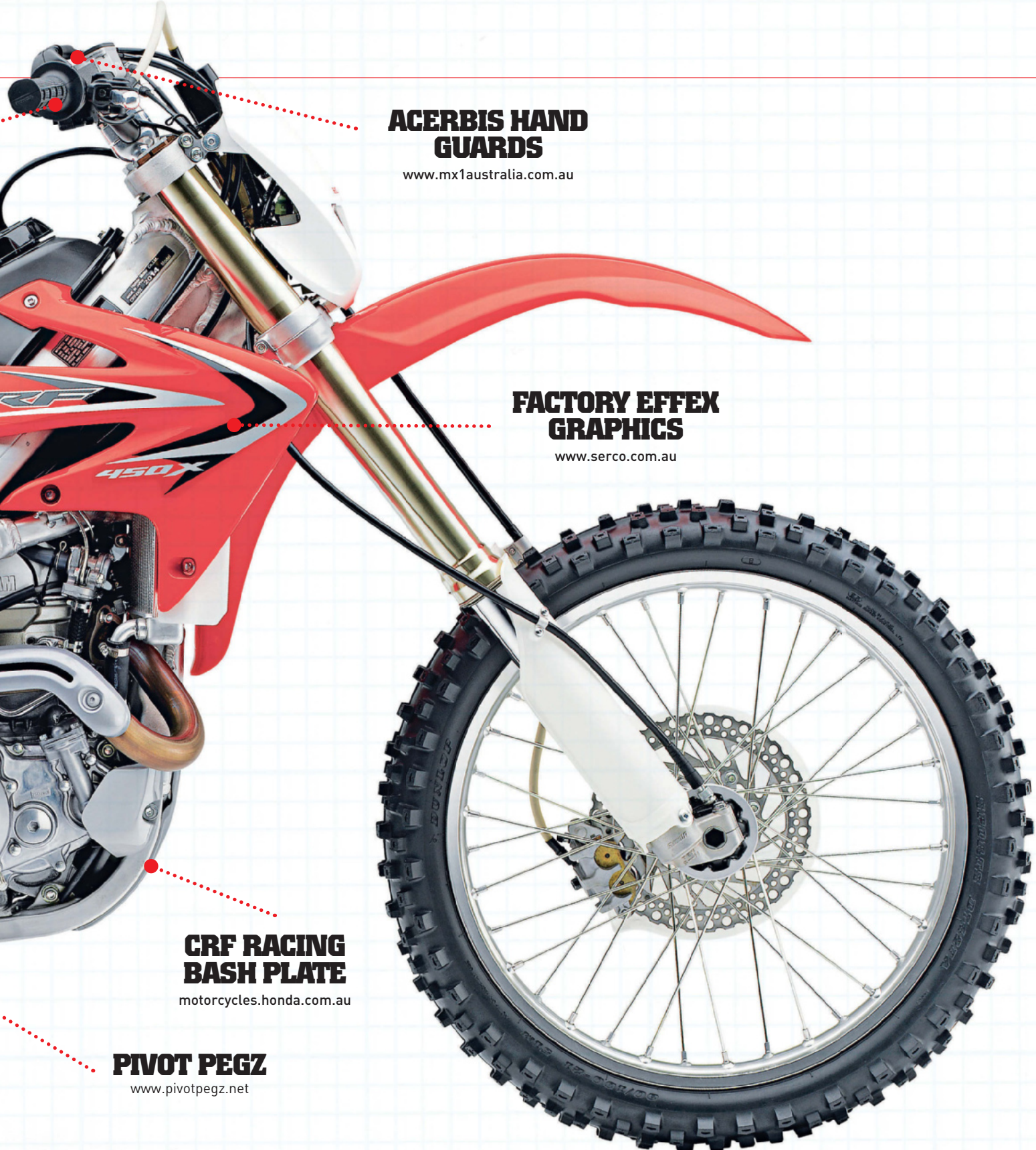
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TECHNICAL CLIMBS

Climbing a technical hill is all about momentum and traction. Here's how to maintain both. STORY SHANE BOOTH PHOTOGRAPHY MATT BERNARD

Getting up a tricky hill isn't about speed, which will just get you into difficulty. Rather, it's all about maintaining momentum; and for that you need traction. The steeper the hill and the more technical, the harder it is to maintain momentum. But there is a combination of skills and techniques that can help you win the battle and get you to the top of the hill.

SCAN AHEAD

Your vision is arguably your most valuable tool. As soon as you spot the hill start to scan up it as far as you can see. The earlier you can spot potential problems and solutions, the better your chances of maintaining momentum. You are looking for the line that offers most traction; try to find the smoothest ground you can, avoiding loose surfaces or rocks where possible. Deep ruts are best avoided but sometimes smaller ruts can offer good traction and help you keep the bike straight, so don't rule them out. The last thing to remember is to be creative and scan the ground where you think no one else has been — that's where you'll probably find the best line.

CLUTCH IS CRITICAL

You will struggle to climb any hill, let alone a technical one, if you don't make good use of the clutch. The clutch is your manual traction control unit. Cover the clutch lever with a finger or two the whole time you are climbing because you'll need to use it. The clutch allows you to control power delivery to the rear wheel much more accurately than by using the throttle alone. It also allows you to ride at slow speeds where necessary and without risk of stalling the engine.

MOMENTUM NOT SPEED

You need to maintain momentum, not build speed. If you can maintain 10km/h up any hill you will make it to the top; it's when you drop to 9km/h and then 8km/h that you get into trouble, meaning you are losing momentum. To maintain momentum you need traction; the rear wheel needs to continue to bite into the ground and drive you forward. That's where scanning for the best line and using the clutch well will help. Find a comfortable speed and maintain it: too fast and you'll have difficulty making decisions and picking good lines. It's all a balancing act to keep

moving at a comfortable speed but not so quick that things start to feel like they are in fast forward.

STAND AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

Stay standing as much as you can. The standing position makes you more agile on the bike and able to react much more effectively. It also stops you from feeling as if you need to put your foot down at every little movement the bike makes. When you are standing you can let the bike change angles as it climbs the hill, while keeping your weight straight down through the footpegs.

IF YOU GET STUCK

If you feel like you are losing the battle try to choose your place to stop. This will allow you to stay in control of the situation. Put your left foot down and your right foot on the rear brake to stop yourself from rolling or sliding backwards. Once you are stopped, assess the situation and slowly back your bike around if you can. You may also need to get off the bike and stay on the high side of it as you reverse it around. Go to the bottom of the hill and have another crack.

STAY WARM

Kit up so you can keep riding through the winter months.

STORY SHANE BOOTH

Take a look at these five products that will provide the best bang for your buck in keeping you from icing up when you hit the trails this winter.



1. BASE LAYERS

Rather than heading out and buying a completely new set of outer-wear-style gear for the winter months, look at purchasing some quality merino base layers that you can wear under your current stuff. It will work very well in keeping you warm and it doesn't add bulk to your gear either.

KATHMANDU FLEECE BALACLAVA - \$39.95
KATHMANDU MERINO SNOW SOCK - \$59.95
KATHMANDU MERINO TOP - \$159.95
KATHMANDU MERINO PANTS - \$139.95





2. GLOVES

For riding in cold weather gloves are a must, but it's a trade-off between warmth and dexterity. Gloves like these do a good job in cold weather while leaving you able to feel your levers and grips. Paired with a good set of handguards they will work for most conditions.

FOX POLAR PAW GLOVE - \$59.95



3. HANDGUARDS

Invest in a set of hand guards to which you can add a spoiler. These Acerbis handguards can have the optional spoiler added which increases the size of the handguard and helps redirect cold air away from your fingers.

ACERBIS X-FORCE HANDGUARD \$69.95

X FORCE SPOILER KIT \$14.95



4. RAIN JACKET

Rather than buying an expensive enduro jacket, you can look at something like this to wear on a cold day or even to have stashed in your CamelBak if the weather turns foul. If you have your base layers on this can work well for a few hours in the morning and then be taken off and restowed once the sun is up.

FOX MX FLUID RAIN JACKET - \$49.95

5. DUAL LAYER LENS

Riding a dirtbike is no fun if you can't see, and in cold weather your goggles will fog up in an instant. Enter the dual-layer lens: this is worth its weight in gold on a brisk day in the trails; the dual lens is the same as you'll find in a snow goggle, will eliminate fogging and allow you to keep your goggles on all day with no problems.

100% VENTED DUAL PANE LENS - \$24.95





SEEING DOUBLE

The bike that doesn't exist has a photo shoot

Honda spent untold sums of money getting back into rally racing and yet said no production bike would come of it. Honda unveiled a prototype bike but said again there would be no production bike. Yet here it is: the next Honda Africa Twin. The bike that wasn't going to exist will go on sale in Europe by the end of the year and, best guess, in Australia some time in early-mid 2016.

Why is it that we only ever learn about these bikes from the internet and sometimes months before any official word from any Australian manufacturer representatives? Not even a slight heads-up that something's coming for us Aussies, as if none of us has the internet and so couldn't possibly find out from an American or European source. In the case of the Africa Twin, it's no great surprise as we don't know anyone in the dirt world who hears (or had heard) anything from Honda Australia now or for the past few years. Things are real quiet in red. We miss you guys... come back.

Be that as it may, the Africa Twin is back. Australia never got an official import of the legendary adventure bike but its deeds and accomplishments are well known. The new one will carry the title of CRF1000L, which is an interesting call as anything CRF is built for offroad use, so we can surmise that this will be a true adventure bike and not another road tourer with long-travel suspension.

The option of Honda's clever DCT transmission is available and the 1000cc engine is a parallel twin that's said to put out somewhere around 110bhp.

Design patent drawings show a pretty slim machine and it'll be interesting to see what the weight figures are and what sort of fuel capacity it carries.

Until further details come in, we'll have to wait patiently. But at least it's finally time to say welcome back to a great old moniker, just as we did with the Ténéré. If only Suzuki would bring back the DR BIG and Kawi would look at the Tengai again we'd have the whole set to play with.

GOOD SLEEP ON COLD RIDES

When the temp gets all Arctic on you

This one's for the more serious outdoor enthusiast. With a comfort rating of -10°C , the Capsule 700 Down sleeping bag is great for any traveller or trekker in extra-cool climates. It has a sensational pack-down size thanks to the 700 grams of 90/10 duck down that provides excellent heat retention. Its full-length zip is on the left of the tapered rectangle bag. Most importantly, any high-performance hiking bag needs to be lightweight and portable and Denali has definitely achieved this with the Capsule 700's pack weight of 1.5kg. No doubt about it, performance and specification make the Capsule 700 one of the best-value duck down sleeping bags on the market today.



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- 10h 30 min from reserve to full power with 1kW charger
- RANGE: 120km estimated riding on offroad recreational trail (before reserve)
- RESERVE POWER: automatically activated at 20 per cent of remaining charge, reducing performance to reach the nearest charging point.

STAY ON TRACK

The best of the best — Aussie made

The RM2 is the only steering damper made especially for adventure bikes. The unit is unique in many ways, from the way it mounts to the bike to the way the adjusters give the rider a huge range of settings for every type of terrain without getting complicated.

Setting the RM2 is very easy to work out and it's easy to adjust, even on the run. First off, there is the eight-position adjuster which offers the same wide range of damping offered by the RM1. There's also the Return-to-Centre adjustment, which offers six levels of damping instead of the RM1's three (M, D, C). The newest addition to the Ralle-Moto steering damper on the RM2 is the new HSi valve which stands for "High-Speed Impact valve", which is like having a spare set of arms in the event of a hit to the front wheel that you don't see — the HSi valve is a speed-sensitive valve that reacts even if you don't.



BIKER'S DREAM — MINI FOOT PUMP

Put your foot down on deflating rubber

Inflating a tyre isn't something anyone does for the fun of it. And if you've ever bought one of the cheaper hand pumps you'll know that the wrong tool can just make the whole thing harder than it needs to be.

We prefer to keep our CO₂ canisters for out on the trails but back in the shed you can't beat a good foot pump — and this is one that features:

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THE HEAT IS ON

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HotHands warmers are single-use air-activated heat packs that provide long-lasting everyday warmth and are ideal for keeping your body warm when the temperature falls. No need to heat up a bulky wheat pack or hot-water bottle. HotHands are air-activated; all you have to do is break the seal and shake — the pack starts heating up straight away.

HotHands gives instant relief from cold and is available in two varieties to warm hands and feet: HotHands Hand Warmers and HotHands Toasti-Toes Toe Warmers.



TACITA T-RALLY

No extension cord jokes necessary.

Electric bikes are no longer a fringe idea promoted by dudes who look Doc Emmett Brown from *Back to the Future*. They are a reality — with limitations, but a reality nonetheless. And time will bring the concept further and further into view as a product that's every bit as viable as a WR250F if not the only alternative should environmental laws worldwide become too prohibitive to run an exhaust system. So far we've seen glimpses of motocross and trail models but an electric adventure seems a sheer impossibility. Yet it just takes someone to start working on it and it will eventually happen (See Tesla).

An Italian company called Tacita has five electric models available and is a good example of an outfit pushing the boundaries. Its range includes a Rally bike called the T-Race Rally and you can check out its specs in the box above.



READERS' RIDES

Matt Boxwell



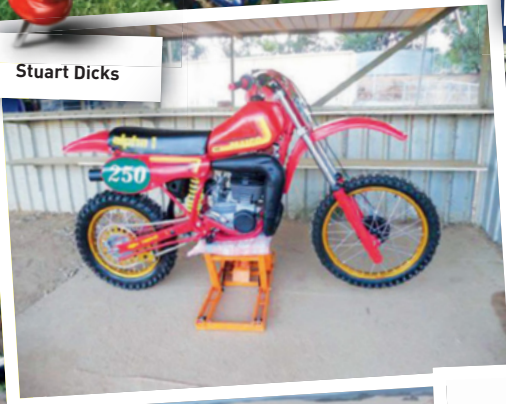
Tony Ewart



Michael Russom



Stuart Dicks



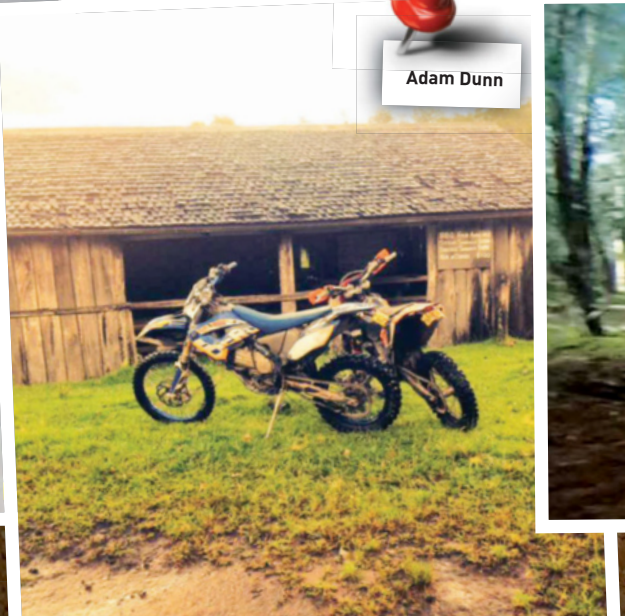
Steve Smith



Kane O'Rourke



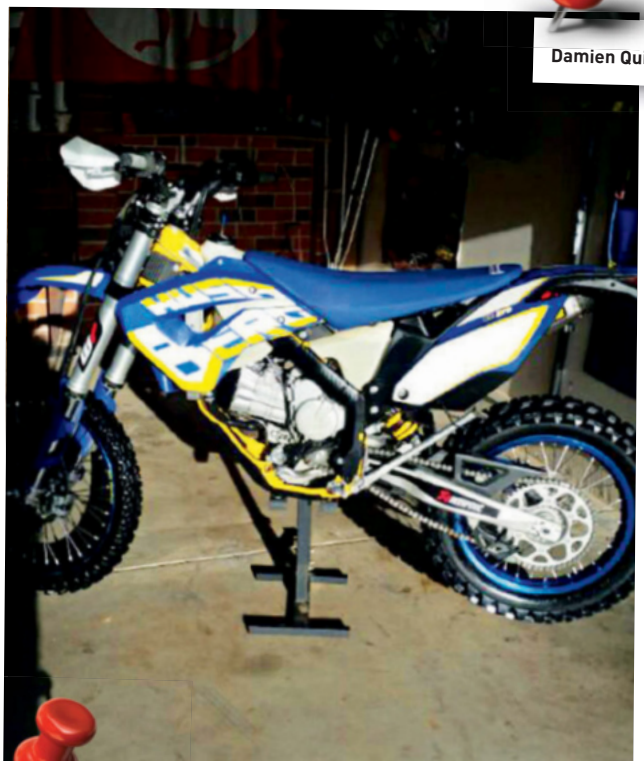
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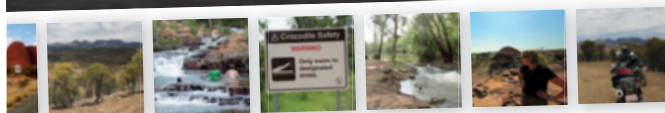
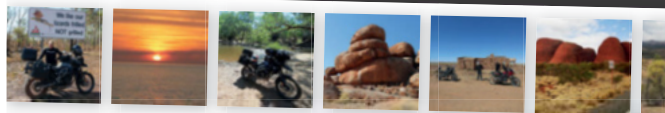
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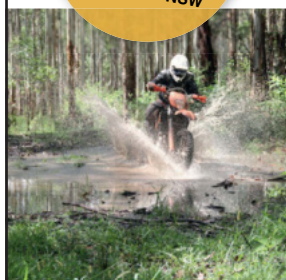
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